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No. 116A

N° 116A

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

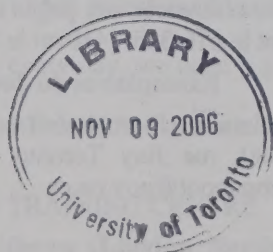
Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 31 October 2006

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Mardi 31 octobre 2006



Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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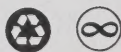
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 31 October 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 31 octobre 2006

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GO TRANSIT

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I rise in this House today to remind the members of the scary record of this McGuinty government. Their more than 50 broken promises continue to haunt Ontario.

More seriously, tackling gridlock is just one of their many broken promises. It's clear that gridlock is growing and that this government still has no concrete plan, but they would say anything to get elected. For example, yesterday commuters had to cope with signal malfunctions at the Mimico GO station that caused cancellations and delays for most of the day. The minister should know that GO Transit is a vitally important part of solving the gridlock problem in the GTA. You should also know that on a typical day GO moves 190,000 passengers; that's 48 million passengers per year who rely on GO Transit rail and bus services.

The GO Transit board has a vision to revitalize Union Station, as well as their tracks, bridges and platforms, and to reorganize and modernize the signal system. They're all examples of the GO organization's leadership and initiative. But GO can't do it alone. The GO board and riders together want support from the McGuinty government. We haven't had much of a plan coming forward recently from this government with respect to GO Transit. We've seen gridlock increase and service levels decrease.

On Halloween, and every day, we need a government that—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

LONDON TRAINING CENTRE

Ms. Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): Today I'd like to recognize a terrific non-profit organization in my riding of London North Centre. Under the leadership of David Corke and Mary Whitaker, the London Training Centre is partnering with employers and other community agencies in London to help unemployed and at-risk youth, women, new Canadians and older unemployed workers to develop their skills so they can find jobs, independence and a brighter future.

The London Training Centre has formed a strong partnership with the Western Fair Association to train

people in food service and hospitality programs, fields with a high demand for new workers. Among other things, the Western Fair donates the use of their industrial kitchens to the program.

Last week I met three extraordinary and determined women who have graduated. Samina Malik is a new Canadian and a single mother of four children who is now working in a high school cafeteria. Laurel Helmuth dropped out of school, but thanks to this program is now working at a photography studio and is headed to college. Carol Kecheho got a job at Kellogg's after a long absence from the workforce.

These are just three of the 1,000 people who have graduated from the London Training Centre in the last three years, 92% of whom have found employment. Recently, the Ontario Trillium Foundation awarded this organization a grant to expand this very successful program to 12 other communities across the province.

I congratulate Samina, Laurel, Carol and the great team at the London Training Centre and the Western Fair Association and thank them for helping make our community stronger.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): The McGuinty government has once again demonstrated that they don't deserve the trust of the people of Ontario. In the spring, the McGuinty government sent cheques out to municipalities with no strings attached but said that they trusted the municipalities would use the money on roads and bridges as intended. But in the same situation, when the federal government sent a cheque to Ontario for affordable housing, the McGuinty government demonstrated they do not deserve to be trusted. The McGuinty government had a chance to fix their broken promise on affordable housing, but they chose to lock \$392 million in the bank instead of keeping their promise.

Their high taxes and economic policies are costing Ontario jobs and increasing the need for affordable housing, but the McGuinty government is refusing to spend the money. They've tried to blame the delay on the federal government, but the facts are clear. The federal government paid their share. The hold-up isn't the federal government. The hold-up is the fact that the McGuinty cabinet is keeping the money locked in a trust fund while they debate whether to take some of the money and use it in other projects. Maybe they're saving the money to take another letter out of the OLCG or to give more pay increases to their friends.

The Liberals have no problem announcing the money and doing the photo ops. For once, the McGuinty government should follow through on a promise and spend the money, as announced, on affordable housing.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): I rise in the House today, in the spirit of Ontario's Salute to Small Business Month, to congratulate business owners and young entrepreneurs in Ottawa–Orléans who have turned their ideas into successful businesses.

On October 18, I was pleased to attend the fifth annual People's Choice Business Awards held by the Orléans Chamber of Commerce. I watched with pride as several businesses in my riding were honoured for their hard work. Among the many recipients that evening was a young man named Remi Paquette, who started his business as a student at the University of Ottawa. He took home the awards for technology business of the year and young business person of the year.

His success can be attributed in part to the McGuinty government's strong support for Ontario's young entrepreneurs. To date we have provided \$1.7 million to the Canadian Youth Business Foundation. As the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship mentioned the other day, this financial support will help our youth to get their ideas off the ground and into the marketplace. It is estimated that this funding will create 2,500 new jobs and generate \$50 million in revenue over the next four years. By supporting our young entrepreneurs and future business leaders, this government is keeping Ontario's economy strong and prosperous.

I commend Mr. Paquette for his hard work and vision. I would also like to congratulate Judith Cane, who was voted business person of the year and professional adviser of the year, and all the other individuals and businesses that were honoured for their success at this awards ceremony.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): I'm pleased to rise today, on Halloween, to remind Ontarians of the McGuinty Liberal government's scary record in the province to date. After three years of being in power in Ontario, the Liberals are continuing to be haunted by their bevy of broken promises like, "I won't raise your taxes," "I won't raise your hydro rates," "We'll have a hard cap of 20 students for early grades and stop school closures." And remember that old goblin that continues to nibble at their heels, that they would balance the budget every year of the mandate? And let's not forget the Liberals' attempt to rule from the grave by extending their partisan Liberal appointments to years beyond their term, or the fact that Ontario is now becoming a graveyard for manufacturing jobs in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario.

The McGuinty Liberals have adopted a trick-or-treat approach to governing this province: If they can't trick people by saying anything to get elected, they will offer a

treat in the form of some timely announcement, only to be broken after the next election.

There's no doubt that there has been an eerie pattern of behaviour by the McGuinty Liberals. They don't act like a governing party. Instead, they blame everything on somebody else, namely, the federal government and ghosts of governments past—with one exception: Bob Rae no longer haunts the Liberal government. He has actually moved over to that side of the Legislature, which makes statements of Finance Minister Greg Sorbara condemning Bob Rae only a few years ago very ironic. Be afraid, be very afraid.

1340

TRANSPORT SCOLAIRE

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmings–Baie James): I want to start my comments by applauding that one. That was pretty good.

J'aimerais amener à l'attention de l'Assemblée une situation qui a commencé cette année avec le gouvernement provincial de M. McGuinty qui, encore, ne comprend pas les enjeux quand ça vient aux difficultés pour les jeunes du nord de l'Ontario.

On sait tous qu'il y a des écoles, telles que l'école Jules-Léger à Ottawa, qui offrent des services aux enfants en difficulté pour avancer leur apprentissage à travers le système scolaire. Dans le passé, la manière dont ça marchait, c'est que les conseils locaux organisaient le transport pour être capables de transporter leurs jeunes directement à l'école provinciale d'Ottawa. Pour nous, c'était une bonne affaire parce que notre conseil, le conseil scolaire catholique des Grandes Rivières de notre région, avait un très bon service pour assister ces jeunes-là et pour être capable de les transporter d'une manière qui faisait du bon sens pour eux et pour leurs familles.

Le gouvernement provincial de M. McGuinty, avec l'ancien ministre M. Gerard Kennedy, a décidé qu'ils vont centraliser le transport pour tous ces jeunes et ont donné l'autorité de centraliser ces services à travers le conseil scolaire catholique d'Ottawa. Je peux dire que c'est un problème pour nous, parce que le service à cette heure, qui est mené, c'est un système qui est moindre de ce à quoi on est habitués, et le conseil scolaire catholique des Grandes Rivières offrait un meilleur service.

Je dis à la ministre de l'Éducation, vous avez une chance d'être capable de renverser cette situation. On vous demande de le faire pour le bon de nos jeunes de notre région.

CORNWALL ECONOMY

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): It is well known in this House that my riding of Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh has faced a number of job losses in the last year. However, rather than taking this as a fatal blow, the people of communities like Chesterville, Iroquois and Cornwall have chosen to take this as a chance to reinvent themselves.

This government has been a willing partner in this time of transition. Initiatives like the forgiveness of the downtown loan, hospital capital projects and key investments that this government has undertaken in skills training are starting to pay off. There is much still to be done, but new businesses are starting to settle in Cornwall.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome Pharmetics Inc., Cornwall's newest business. Pharmetics is a company that makes and distributes over-the-counter drug products as well as vitamins, minerals and herbal supplements for companies such as Costco, Loblaws and Shoppers Drug Mart.

The pharmaceutical sector is one in the process of expansion and will find that Cornwall and its people create a perfect environment to develop their interests. Businesses like Pharmetics Inc. will play an important role in the transitional economies of communities across Ontario like Cornwall. With the strategic support of this government, these businesses will find plenty of opportunity in this province.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome Pharmetics to Cornwall, and I look forward to a long and positive relationship with them in the future.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): Today I rise before the House to celebrate the October 16 announcement at the Ford assembly plant in my riding of Oakville.

With Wayne Gretzky on hand, Ford announced that the two new models, the Ford Edge and the Lincoln MKX, will begin production in Oakville. This is fantastic news for the almost 4,000 people employed at the plant. These hard-working men and women can breathe a much-deserved sigh of relief, thanks in part to the \$100-million investment made by the McGuinty government in support of that plant's \$1-billion conversion to a flexible manufacturing operation.

The plant has returned to a two-shift workday. Ford forecasts production of over 1,200 vehicles each and every day, with a total of 250,000 vehicles produced in 48 weeks. To add to this fantastic news is a forecasted addition of a third vehicle to the plant's production in 2008.

This is just the beginning of great things to come for Oakville and Ontario as a result of the Liberal initiatives that have already generated over \$7 billion in investments in the Ontario auto industry.

I'm proud to be part of a government committed to supporting the auto industry. We should all celebrate this fantastic news and the promise and hope it brings to the Ontario economy and its continued strength and prosperity.

ACADEMIC TESTING

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): Just last month our government, in concert with EQAO, released another round of testing results for our schools here in the great province of Ontario. These outcomes are a

testament to the continued commitment our government has shown since we took office back in 2003. The results are a far cry from the Conservative days where there were constant classroom disruptions and slashes to government funding. Instead, Ontario schools have shown an overall average increase of 10% in their test results.

A perfect example of these results is being seen in a school in my riding of Mississauga East. The third grade classes of Thornwood Public School have shown a dramatic overall average increase from 44% to a whopping 89% in tested areas of reading, writing and mathematics since we took office in 2003. Each member of this school's faculty, parents and especially the children should be applauded for their efforts and their ongoing commitment to better education.

I am reminded of a quote by the Greek philosopher Plato: "The direction in which education starts a man will determine his future life."

Mr. Kormos: What about women?

Mr. Fonseca: And women, as the member from Niagara says.

The Ministry of Education should be congratulated on the hard work they continue to do on a daily basis to provide the direction our children need to prepare themselves for a positive future.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): Speaker, I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on general government and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 148, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act respecting the use of seat belts / Projet de loi 148, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne le port de la ceinture de sécurité.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I move that pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Tuesday, October 31, 2006, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1348 to 1353.

The Speaker: Mr. Caplan has moved government notice of motion number 220. All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Amott, Ted	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Patten, Richard
Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Peters, Steve
Balkissoon, Bas	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Barrett, Toby	Hardeman, Ernie	Pupatello, Sandra
Bartolucci, Rick	Hoy, Pat	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bentley, Christopher	Hudak, Tim	Racco, Mario G.
Bradley, James J.	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramal, Khalil
Broten, Laurel C.	Klees, Frank	Rinaldi, Lou
Brownell, Jim	Kular, Kuldip	Ruprecht, Tony
Bryant, Michael	Levac, Dave	Sandals, Liz
Cansfield, Donna H.	Martiniuk, Gerry	Scott, Laurie
Caplan, David	Matthews, Deborah	Smith, Monique
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Mauro, Bill	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Colle, Mike	McNeely, Phil	Tory, John
Crozier, Bruce	Meilleur, Madeleine	Van Bommel, Maria
Delaney, Bob	Miller, Norm	Watson, Jim
Dhillon, Vic	Milloy, John	Witmer, Elizabeth
Di Cocco, Caroline	Mitchell, Carol	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Munro, Julia	Zimmer, David
Duguid, Brad	Oraziotti, David	

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Chudleigh, Ted	Marchese, Rosario	Prue, Michael
DiNovo, Cheri	Martel, Shelley	Tabuns, Peter
Elliott, Christine	Murdoch, Bill	Yakabuski, John
Horwath, Andrea	O'Toole, John	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 59; the nays are 14.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): We have with us in the Speaker's gallery today two chief whips from the Parliament of Ghana. They are the Honourable Osei Kyei Mensah-Bonsu, the majority chief whip, and the Honourable John Tia, minority chief whip. Please join me in welcoming our guests.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

SCHOOL FACILITIES

INSTALLATIONS SCOLAIRES

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): The McGuinty government understands that a school is

much more than a building for teaching and learning. Our schools should serve as hubs for Ontario's communities, improving our quality of life and building the future prosperity of our people. That's why I'm delighted today to announce a new government investment that will build approximately 100 new schools across the province over the next few years.

One hundred new schools will be built with \$1 billion worth of funding: \$700 million will be invested to replace schools that are in poor condition as part of the government's comprehensive \$4-billion Good Places to Learn initiative to renew Ontario's schools; \$220 million will be invested to ensure that French-language school boards can provide schools in areas where Franco-Ontarians live; and another \$137 million will be invested in new school construction for school boards experiencing pockets of growth in new residential areas.

These 100 new schools are in addition to the 200 that have already been opened or are in construction under the McGuinty government.

Le soutien aux écoles en tant que pivots communautaires et l'amélioration des environnements d'apprentissage pour les élèves font partie des mesures que prend le gouvernement McGuinty pour appuyer chaque élève et pour oeuvrer du côté des familles ontariennes qui veulent avoir la meilleure éducation publique pour leurs enfants.

A key priority of the McGuinty government has been to keep good schools open. Immediately upon taking office, the government asks school boards to put a moratorium on school closures. This pause allowed the government to develop a new tool for boards to empower local decision-making on school closures.

The new pupil accommodation review guidelines that we released today will ensure that capital planning decisions are made with the meaningful participation of the community and that those decisions are based on the school's value to the students and to the community.

No longer will parents and community members fight to be heard, no longer will they struggle to get the information they need and no longer will they feel that the process has been rushed through because the decision was already made.

Thanks to these new guidelines and our government's investments, school boards will be able to close some of the schools that are in poor condition and build or expand schools to replace them.

Les conseils scolaires et les parents participeront aux décisions sur ce qui arrivera aux installations scolaires de leur région.

We want to make sure that all students go to school in a safe, healthy and vibrant learning environment. These guidelines are just one part of many initiatives this government is undertaking, including new schools, school repairs and new programs, that will help us achieve that goal. By fixing our schools, we're creating good places to learn and helping students across the province to reach their full potential. Because, if we reach every student and help them achieve their full potential, we're working to ensure a strong and prosperous Ontario for us all.

1400

INVESTMENT IN ONTARIO

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues): It gives me great pleasure to announce to this House another outstanding investment in Ontario. The Premier, the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, Leona Dombrowsky, and I were on hand for the groundbreaking of yet another great investment in Ontario, and I say "great" on purpose. Kellogg's will build a breakfast cereal production plant in Belleville—congratulations to Belleville—the first of its kind to be developed by the company in North America in 20 years, and they're doing it right here in Ontario.

This is great news for Belleville and the surrounding area. It means hundreds of new jobs and many opportunities for workers and their families.

Kellogg's has an outstanding reputation, with 100 years of global success. This year they're celebrating their 100th anniversary. It instills a strong culture of continuous improvement—a level of innovation that our government aggressively supports through Ontario's advanced manufacturing investment strategy.

As a government, we are helping companies position themselves as global leaders so they will continue to have success here in our province by creating good jobs and generating wealth in our communities. This is another great Ontario success story that will help attract more investment and create high-value jobs for families. It tells us we're moving in the right direction when we continue to win major investments like this one, at a time when jurisdictions around the world are competing head-to-head.

This is a great show of confidence in Ontario's economy, in our future, and in our agriculture and manufacturing sectors, a workforce that has given Kellogg's cause to invest more in Ontario. It confirms Ontario is a great place to invest, and that's a strong message, one that we are taking around the world. I hope you're going to indulge us when I say, in the great words of Tony the Tiger, this is grreat.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Response?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Kellogg's new facility is great news to the folks in Belleville, especially the 80 people who just lost their jobs at GH Packaging and Nordenia International when they closed their doors in September; it will be welcome news to the families employed by Monico Industrial Cleaners, who are all out of work with the announced closing of their facility in Belleville; and there will be yet another 145 families looking for work in Belleville once Lipton-Unilever closes its doors forever, as it has announced.

This government continues to ignore the real issues faced by businesses and investors in Ontario. We are all growing weary of their policy of saying anything to get elected. This government seems to have a habit of attempting to take credit for any good-news stories it

happens to stumble across when it comes to our economy, but they continue to ignore the plant closures in Ontario.

Plant closures and layoffs stain the landscapes in Ontario. One does not have to look too far to see the true effects of Dalton McGuinty's high-tax regime in Ontario. You'd be hard-pressed to find one member in this Legislature who hasn't had a layoff or a plant closure notice in his or her riding since the Liberals took power in 2003. Instead of piggybacking on good-news announcements by private investors, the government should be working on alleviating the tax burdens of Ontario's businesses by moving more quickly to phase out capital tax, reform the provincial sales tax to avoid taxing business inputs, and reduce the corporate tax rate.

Three years into its mandate, I have to wonder when exactly this government plans to put business investment in Ontario back on the right track. When talking about the new Kellogg's plant, the Premier ends his release by stating that he is going to work on keeping Ontario one of the most competitive places in the world. Wake up and smell the coffee, Premier—oh, wait: Maybe you can't smell the coffee because Nestlé's closed the door of its coffee plant in Chesterville back in May, putting 300 more people in eastern Ontario out of work.

So Kellogg's is bringing 100 new jobs into Belleville, but what else have we got? We've got GH Packaging, 80 jobs lost; Lipton's, 145 jobs lost; and Monico, 55 jobs lost. That's 280 jobs lost; 100 jobs gained. I don't like your math, Minister.

When will you stop saying anything to get elected and make Ontario a more competitive place to do business in?

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): In response to the Minister of Education's announcement today that she is going to provide funding for some 100 schools, it's interesting that she says, "within the next few years." What we don't know is whether that's two years, five years or 10 years. But typical of how this government continues to make announcements, she announces \$1 billion; what she doesn't tell us is how much of that \$1 billion this government will actually transfer to school boards to build those schools. She gives us a clue: Of the \$137 million, she's prepared to transfer \$10 million. Essentially what that means is that the minister today has made an announcement that by providing \$10 million to school boards, she'll allow them to go into debt for \$127 million. That's what we have from this minister. She also hasn't told us what is going to happen to many of the schools in this province that are now on the plans of school boards to be torn down, to be closed. In one breath, she announced 100 schools to be built at some point in the future; very quietly she tells us that she is going to start closing schools.

I'm going to ask the minister to come very clean with the people of this province. And she laughs. What she is

telling you is that she is not prepared to tell us the facts about this announcement today.

February 2005 is when this announcement was first made. It was a \$4-billion announcement. Based on true calculations, this minister only plans on transferring 7% of \$4 billion and is inviting school boards to go into debt for the balance. If this is a clue of the kind of mismanagement this government is wreaking on school boards, we can hardly wait to see the next budget come from the Minister of Finance which, no doubt, will have more of this snake oil salesman type of accounting that the Minister of Education has given school boards to date.

What we would ask the minister to do is to factually present to this House and to the people of Ontario the true state of finances in the Ministry of Education. Multi-billions of dollars of committed spending shorted by her ministry to school boards across the province: That's why we have school boards in deficit situations, in serious problems, in this province.

Minister, come clean with the people of Ontario. We ask you to do the responsible thing—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

INVESTMENT IN ONTARIO

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): On behalf of New Democrats, we say to the people of Belleville that this is much-needed good news, because we know there's been a lot of bad news over the last three years since the government has taken office, when it comes to the thousands of jobs that have been lost, or the tens of thousands of jobs that have been lost in northern Ontario, and 100,000 overall across the province.

It has been a very difficult time for many families in this province. We've seen from communities in Fort Frances to Hamilton to Niagara to Sarnia to Cornwall to Ottawa that thousands and thousands of people lost their jobs under the McGuinty government's watch. Finally we have some good news.

Despite what this government's doing in Belleville, we say congratulations to the community of Belleville. These are jobs that will be well needed, but we also understand there is much left to do.

I just say to the minister across the way, if you can only convince the rest of the cabinet and people within your government to deal with the issues that are crucial to making the economy move in Ontario, such as dealing with the price of electricity and others, we would be a lot better off at the end of the day.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): It is a pleasure to speak to this oleaginous, saponaceous and lubricious announcement by this minister. And this is true.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member for Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Marchese: The Minister of Education is right. I used to use those words for the Conservative government, and she ought to be surprised that I'm using them for her and her government. Why do I say this? Let me, please, do a review.

I remember mon ami M. Kennedy in the first year announcing \$200 million to deal with the \$4 billion of capital needs the Tories had identified in 2002, monies they never spent, but at least they identified the needs. And so Kennedy comes into power and says, "We are going to spend \$200 million, which will generate \$3 billion worth of capital projects."

The first year went by; not one cent had been spent. The next year he comes and makes another announcement—an announcing, pre-announcing, re-announcing kind of announcement—and then he announces that \$275 million will be spent. We're waiting and we're waiting for the money to flow, and they keep on announcing and re-announcing the same money.

1410

Finally, Good Places to Learn comes forth: \$75 million will be spent immediately. We're waiting and waiting, looking at the facts, if we can, if they release it. Well, some money was spent, but it wasn't \$75 million. Of all the \$275 million they promised—that doesn't exist; it's fictitious—only about \$22 million has been spent, and now the minister announces another of that billion dollars will be spent for yet another 100 new schools. They're just announcements after announcements.

You've got to love these Liberals. You almost believe them every time they announce it. You say, "Maybe this time," and then they find some parents or some trustees to say, "Thank God, another announcement. More money is coming." And it never flows. That's why I say, "Oleaginous, saponaceous and lubricious announcements by the Liberals," because it's greasy, it's sticky, it's something you can't get hold of. It's money that just slips through your hands.

So we say to you, when are you going to bring in that standing committee on education finance so we can actually get a chance to review your numbers, so that can you tell us how great you are with your numbers, so that we can get people to come to the committee and say, "But you haven't spent the money that you said you did"? When are you going to keep that simple promise of having a standing committee on education finance so we could make you accountable, as you want to be held accountable, as you often say you are?

Do we not need clarity and accountability? Yes, we do. Is that what the Liberals claim they're doing? No, they are not doing it at all, each and every time. You've got a foul, failed, flawed Conservative funding formula that you are still using, and until you fix that, we've got a financial problem on our hands. So the Liberals finally release this policy on the closure of small schools. I'm going to tell you, until you fix the funding formula, boards are going to want to close schools, because without adequate money they have no other option but to close small schools even if they want to keep them open.

What you've done with the Toronto board, by forcing them to use \$40 million of capital money for operational dollars, I tell you, is, for Liberals, disrespectful at best. Even Peel Catholic said, "We wanted to do the same. We had a meeting with the minister and she said, 'You can't do that.'" Toronto board has its meeting: \$40 million from capital is being used for operations.

You've got to fix the foul, failed, flawed Conservative funding formula, and until you do that, our school system is in trouble.

ORAL QUESTIONS

NATIVE LAND DISPUTE

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier, and it concerns Caledonia. For 246 days now, the Douglas Creek Estates lands have been occupied by protestors, and the government over that time has adopted many different positions. First they ignored the situation for months, then they downplayed the situation, then they said they weren't going to negotiate until certain conditions were met, but a matter of hours later, before the condition were met, they started negotiating again. Then they said they'd compensate homeowners, but four months later there has been no compensation. Then they said they were working very well with the federal government, but now they're saying something quite different. I think it's clear that this government will say anything they can get away with in this matter and do as little as possible in the meantime.

My question is this: On August 30, 2006, the Premier said that the protestors had to be off the land come winter. Is the Premier going to keep his word on this and maintain the consistency of that position or has he changed his mind on that as well?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): The leader of the official opposition will know that the minister responsible for aboriginal affairs is meeting this afternoon in Ottawa with his counterpart, Minister Prentice. I think it would be helpful if the leader of the official opposition would pick up the phone, speak with either Prime Minister Harper or Minister Prentice, and help them understand that what we have here is a long-standing dispute between the federal government and the Six Nations community. We're doing what we can to manage this situation on the ground, but at the end of the day the only resolution that is going to come about will come about when the federal government demonstrates some resolve, some conviction and some determination to deal with this matter in a forthright fashion.

Mr. Tory: The only person who requires some resolve, some conviction and determination is the Premier of Ontario, who has his own responsibilities that he hasn't faced up to in this matter.

We all read, of course, that your minister is going down to Ottawa today to plead for some compensation

from the federal government in respect of decisions that the Premier of this province took to buy the land, and the policing decisions, at your cost, and they're your responsibility.

Not long ago, we asked the Premier what the total costs were for this matter so far. We estimated \$55 million, a number the Premier would neither confirm nor deny. His minister said it will cost what it will cost—an incredible attitude with respect to the taxpayers' money. It's now a month later and we think the costs could be up to \$60 million or \$65 million. The minister is going to Ottawa to ask for an unspecified amount from the federal government.

My question is this: Why can't the Premier tell us, if he's the man in charge of the taxpayers' money, how much this has cost us so far? You must know the answer to that question and you should share it with the taxpayers right now.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The leader of the official opposition will know that we have now provided support in the following ways: We have purchased the Douglas Creek Estates, something the leader of the official opposition opposes; we provided money for a business assistance plan; we provided money for signage and markings on the land; we are, in fact, going to provide additional monies for assistance for residents; we provided provincial money for a marketing campaign; we provided provincial money for a new school fence and security cameras; we provided provincial money for communications help for the municipality; provincial money for a toll-free info line, and a website; and, of course, there remain outstanding Ontario Provincial Police costs.

All of that is provincial money. All of that is something that Ontario taxpayers have been encumbered with as a result of this matter stretching out further and further and longer and longer.

I want you to know that the federal government has not spent a single penny in order to provide assistance to the people of the community of Caledonia. So I'm looking forward to the result of this meeting this afternoon, and again I ask the leader of the official opposition whether or not he intends to support the demand on behalf of—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tory: All that was missing from that list was some conviction, some resolve and some determination to actually get something done.

The government has been asked time and time again about the cost, and all the Premier and his ministers are able to say is that it will cost what it's going to cost.

On August 1, 2006, the Hamilton Spectator submitted a freedom of information request to the OPP via the government, requesting policing costs for the ongoing operation. The response, as happens so often, was that it would take 200 hours and cost \$6,000, and we're still waiting. That was on August 1. Compare this to the

actions of the RCMP, in a truly open and transparent government, where they responded quickly with more than 250 documents, including the estimates of the cost or the actual costs, and at no cost to the person asking.

On this matter, I would argue that the Premier of Ontario, the man entrusted with the taxpayers' money, should know how much that whole list costs that he recited a few moments ago and be prepared to share it with the taxpayers. My question is this: Will you find out the accurate estimate of the policing and other costs so far, save a public servant the 20 hours of work, and save the Hamilton Spectator—

The Speaker: The question has been asked.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I said to the media this morning, when asked about this, that we would be making the total figure public very shortly.

Again I say to the leader of the official opposition, no, we will not direct the Ontario Provincial Police.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie—Lincoln): I think you already did.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: We will continue to work with the communities involved. What we have done is organize a negotiating table that has brought all parties together. We have arranged for the purchase of the land in question, which we are holding in trust. We are working with the community on an ongoing basis to ease tensions.

I notice that one of my good friends opposite is implying directly that somebody somehow, on this side of the House, has provided direction to the Ontario Provincial Police. I want to make it clear to him, as I have to the media and all others in Ontario, that no such direction has been provided and I will not, unlike what has been suggested by the leader of the official opposition, provide any instructions of any kind to the police when it comes to managing this situation.

1420

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Tory: We'll see who said what to who when we have a full inquiry, which we'll call into this matter when we form the government.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The Attorney General will come to order.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): As the Premier is aware, there were last week serious allegations which go to the root of the trust in the activities of the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. and its security procedures. We asked several times whether the government would appoint a forensic auditor to come in and investigate the allegations and all the facts surrounding this matter on the television report. The government has so far refused, relying on an internal review and analysis, as they call it, and the Ombudsman, who likely doesn't have the resources to finance a proper audit.

Then we find out on Global Television last Thursday that the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. has commissioned a poll to see if everybody can kind of skate this through. Now, how is it, I ask the Premier, that we're able to find the tens of thousands of dollars to finance a poll but you will not allow this matter to be investigated completely by an independent, outside forensic auditor to get to the bottom of it? Why can you afford one and not the other?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I am concerned that the member opposite doesn't have faith in an independent officer of this Legislature: the Ombudsman. I welcome his investigation.

I'm surprised as well that the member opposite is not familiar with the firm of Ernst and Young, one of Canada's leading forensic audit companies. They had a chance to take a look at the OLG's internal controls, and I would quote from their May 15, 2006, report: "The Insider Win policy provides the utmost integrity of the OLG in the conduct of lottery games by ensuring that there is no perception of an unfair advantage by an OLG lottery winner who is closely affiliated with the OLG."

I say with respect that I would recommend to the Leader of the Opposition that we allow the Ombudsman to do his work, issue his report, and any necessary action will be taken.

Mr. Tory: Perhaps I could follow up to the Premier and ask this: In the event that we have the Ernst and Young letter that you referred to, which does not, of course, take account of the facts brought to light by the Fifth Estate television program, and in the event that the Ombudsman finds he doesn't have the resources to do this himself, will you commit now that you will make the funds available to retain that very same firm, Ernst and Young, to update the audit they did earlier to include the facts contained in the Fifth Estate program so that people who go up to the counter at the store to buy their ticket will know that you left no stone unturned in trying to get to the bottom and have outside professional people look at this? A simple request: Will you allow the Ombudsman to have the money, or your self-financed Ernst and Young, to have an independent, outside update of the investigation of these particular allegations so lottery ticket buyers can have confidence that you've gone right to the bottom of this? Will you do it?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I can tell you that a request has been made, at least I hope it has so far, from the Ombudsman to the Fifth Estate to provide the information, the data they used, the methodology that was used, the analysis they did to come to the conclusion of a very serious allegation. I treat this matter and this government treats this matter with the utmost seriousness. That's why I've asked the chair, on behalf of all the shareholders—the people of Ontario—to conduct a review and analysis and to report back as quickly as possible.

I note to the member opposite that I have full confidence in the Ombudsman, who receives funding and support from this Legislature, as supported by all members of the Board of Internal Economy. The Ombudsman says he will report within 90 days. I suggest that we allow the Ombudsman to do his work and give his report. I want to assure the member that any necessary action will be taken by this government to protect the integrity of the lottery and gaming system in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Tory: I am asking the minister perhaps one more time. He said that he took this matter with the utmost seriousness, and I'll take him at his word on that. Therefore, if you wanted to "do everything necessary"—those are the kinds of words that are sometimes used without answering what was a very direct question. I'll ask it again: If you want to do everything necessary to reassure people who are going in and playing the games and buying the tickets that everything is being done to investigate this and determine if it's true or not and what needs to be done about it, why wouldn't you stand up in your place right now and say that you will commit to updating the Ernst and Young study and to having money made available to the Ombudsman, should he request it or that you do it yourself, to make sure that someone independent looks at this and decides if there's something to it or not and what recommendations they would make?

Back in opposition, your Premier said you didn't believe that people should investigate themselves. When you say the chairman is doing it, that's the lottery corporation investigating itself. Will you commit to the money being made available, directly or through the Ombudsman, to finance an audit if he asks for one? Will you do it?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I'm shocked that the member doesn't understand basic corporate governance, that the board of a corporation does not represent the interests of the corporation but rather the interests of the shareholder.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I can wait. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Apparently, I've touched a nerve of the members opposite.

I have full faith and confidence in the Ombudsman. He has proven to be quite an effective advocate when matters are brought to his attention and when he launches an investigation. I know he will do a thorough job. I welcome his report. When it is unveiled publicly, we will have a chance to see what his recommendations are and take the appropriate actions at that time.

In the meantime, notwithstanding that, the chair of the board, Mr. Gough, who was supported by all members of the all-party standing committee on government agencies, which I say to the member opposite was chaired by a member of his caucus, an excellent member—to protect the public interest, to get to the bottom of things and to have action ensue as quickly as possible. That is the desire of this government—

The Speaker: Thank you.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): Premier, every day working women and men in Ontario do their best to make ends meet. They look to their governments to provide some leadership and some direction that will help them in their day-to-day lives. But today, when they open their newspapers, they see you and Stephen Harper engaging in insults and passing the buck.

Shortly after your election, you claimed—and I want to quote you here—to have “ushered in a new era of working constructively with the federal government.” Can you explain, Premier, why the new era looks a lot like the same old pointing of fingers at Ottawa and blaming someone else?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I guess I should apologize to the leader of the NDP if I'm making him feel a little bit uncomfortable because we do what we think is right on behalf of the people of Ontario. It was Prime Minister Harper who said he was going to address this issue of the fiscal imbalance. He said that before, during and after the campaign, after he'd earned the privilege of serving Canadians as the leader of their new government.

We have a very good case to make on behalf of the people of Ontario. By and large, it's the same case we made to the previous federal government, and we will continue to make that case. I thought we had the support of the leader of the NDP. I thought we had two all-party resolutions which said that together we would stand up on behalf of the people of Ontario and, among other things, we would say that when it comes to the money we receive from the federal government for our health care and education, we shouldn't get a penny less than Canadians get in other provinces. We're being shortchanged by \$1.1 billion. I'd ask the leader of the NDP to stand with Ontarians—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, my point is that you promised a new era of co-operation with the federal government but what ordinary Ontarians see, when they turn on the television, is the same old blame game being engaged in by your government.

1430

A year ago, the federal government was forced to rewrite their federal budget. As a result of that, there was \$1 billion of new money for students in colleges and universities to reduce tuition fees. There was \$1.4 billion in new federal money for people waiting for affordable housing. There was \$900 million of new federal money for people who use public transit. Your government received that money, received it all. But you know what? Tuition fees haven't come down, they've gone up, there are higher transit fees, and the waiting list for affordable housing gets longer and longer. What did you do with that money, Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I've seen a lot of things in my 16 years in this Legislature, but for the first time, I've

seen the leader of the NDP become an apologist for a federal Conservative government—the very first time.

The leader of the NDP may not think it's important, but we think that Ontarians should receive the same for their health care and education as other Canadians do. We think that Ontarians should receive the same for their infrastructure as other Canadians do. We think that Ontarians should receive the same for their training as other Canadians do. We think that unemployed Ontarians should receive the same for employment insurance as other Canadians do. We're not looking for a special deal; we're just looking for a fair deal. We're looking for Prime Minister Harper to honour the commitment he made to Ontarians before, during and after the campaign.

Again I ask the leader of the NDP, when did he decide that he's no longer going to stand up for Ontarians and that, instead, he's going to stand up for the Harper government in this Legislature?

Mr. Hampton: I'm standing up for the working families across Ontario who want to know what happened to the tuition fee money.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Minister of Health Promotion, I will not warn you again.

Leader of the third party.

Mr. Hampton: You see, Premier, those working families want to know what happened to that money that was supposed to be used to reduce tuition fees. What happened to that money that was supposed to be used to build new affordable housing? For example, Nova Scotia used that new federal money to actually stop tuition fee increases. Here in Ontario, you took the money that was supposed to be used to reduce tuition fees, you pocketed it, and now you're going to raise tuition fees by 36% over four years.

I'm simply asking, Premier, what did you do with the new federal money that was already sent to Ontario in the last year? It wasn't used for new affordable housing, it wasn't used to reduce tuition fees, and transit fees are higher than ever. What did you do with the new federal money you already got?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I think the leader of the NDP well understands that we're putting billions into housing, post-secondary education and health care as well.

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): And student assistance.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: And student assistance. He knows that our \$6.2-billion plan for post-secondary education is the first of its kind in 40 years in this province, and it puts us head and shoulders above any other provincial government in terms of our manifest commitment to the younger generation. I think that's very clear.

Where we remain unclear is where Mr. Hampton stands with respect to standing up for the people of Ontario. Is he or is he not with us when it comes to laying claim to the \$86 per capita we should be getting for our

health care and education? Is he with us or against us when it comes to getting the \$314 million for additional training opportunities for the people of Ontario? Is he with us or against us when it comes to claiming that \$1.2 billion for infrastructure? What the people of Ontario want to know is where the NDP stands when it comes to standing up for the people of Ontario.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): The Premier mentions housing. There are 122,000 families in Ontario waiting for affordable housing. You promised to build 20,000 new units of affordable housing. In your fourth year of government, you're not even one quarter of the way there. You got \$400 million of new federal money to spend on affordable housing, but you're not spending it on affordable housing. Instead, you've got it in a bank account.

Premier, instead of spending all your time bickering and squabbling with Stephen Harper, why haven't you taken that \$400 million of new federal money that was given to you to build affordable housing and used it to build affordable housing?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Let's get one thing straight: The amount of money that was set aside by both the federal and the provincial governments last year, namely \$602 million, currently is being spent on affordable housing.

One hundred twenty-eight projects are either built or have been built, are occupied or are in the planning stage right now clear across this province, from Toronto to the smallest community that's out there. It's going to create something like 6,500 units of new affordable housing. That's in addition to the 3,500 rent supplement units that we've got out on the market since 2003 and in addition to the 5,000 units for housing allowances that are out there right now, to be used by the service managers for all those vacant units across this province that can be used. We are spending the money that has been allocated for affordable housing on the affordable housing program. We'll continue to do that. We're going to meet our commitment. We're going to make sure—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Supplementary?

Mr. Hampton: For all those working families across Ontario that are desperately waiting for affordable housing, here is the reality under the McGuinty government. You haven't even spent the provincial money that you promised to build affordable housing. You're not even halfway to the 20,000 units that you promised. Meanwhile, there is \$400 million of new federal money, which is supposed to be used to build affordable housing, that you're sitting on in a bank account.

I say to the Premier, who promised a new era of co-operation with the federal government, with so many

working families desperate for affordable housing, why are you sitting on \$400 million of new federal money intended to be used to build affordable housing? Why aren't you using it to build affordable housing?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: The thing that is absolutely fascinating is that all the affordable housing money that was set aside by the federal government and provincial government was in the budget for this year, and that party voted against the budget. They voted against the affordable housing units that are currently being built.

As the member well knows, it takes time for projects to be developed; it takes time to go through the planning processes. There are municipalities that have said that their approvals are involved. We are moving as fast as we can to make sure that the commitments we made in April 2005, when the agreement with the federal government was signed—to make sure that those units are being built and occupied as soon as possible.

Mr. Hampton: Well, Minister, even your own officials don't agree with you. We met with Ministry of Finance officials and they were very clear that you haven't spent the \$400 million of new, additional federal money for affordable housing. Yes, you may have booked it in your budget, but it hasn't been spent on affordable housing. In fact, they say that you might not spend it on affordable housing, that you might spend it on something else.

I ask again of the Premier—instead of pointing the finger at Ottawa and their pointing the finger back at you: You've received money for affordable housing; you haven't spent it on affordable housing. You received money to reduce tuition fees; you didn't reduce tuition fees. In fact, you're going to increase them by 36% over the next four years. You received money to lower transit fees; instead, transit fees are going up. Why haven't you spent the federal money that you've already received to make a difference for working families in Ontario?

1440

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: The trust monies, the way I understand it, were only received by the province less than a month ago. As the member well knows, it's going to take time to develop the kind of program that will be needed in order to get that housing money out the door.

It's always been part of the plan with respect to new affordable housing, with respect to the housing allowance program, that it was going to take a period of time to roll this money out. It isn't a question of getting the money one day and just starting a project the next day. If you've ever been involved in a project of affordable housing, you darn well know that. It's going to take time to plan the project, it's going to take time to get the necessary approvals, it's going to take time to build the project, and only after that can the buildings actually be occupied.

We are going to live up to our commitment on affordable housing. We've got \$602 million of federal and provincial money set aside for that right now. That money will be spent on affordable housing so that the vulnerable in our society, whether they're seniors, whether they're disabled or families, can be —

The Speaker: Thank you.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): To the Minister of Education: This morning, Ontarians were treated to yet another one of the minister's dog-and-pony shows. She announced \$1 billion to build 100 new schools in Ontario. What we would like to know is, and I'm sure what Ontarians would like to know, how much of the \$1 billion that she announced today will the Ministry of Education actually transfer to school boards? Of the \$1 billion announced as a government investment in new schools, how much will your ministry transfer to school boards?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): I think I would have expected a little more sophistication from the member opposite in terms of an understanding of how financing works. What we said when we announced Good Places to Learn is that we were going to flow \$280 million a year to school boards, each year for four years, which would leverage \$4 billion of investments in our schools. What we are doing is giving money to school boards in order that they can borrow, and we're changing a regulation so they can borrow at a very good rate over the long term, which is the way school board projects have always been done over time.

I think it would behoove the member opposite to have a conversation with some of the people at the York region school board, where 171 projects have been completed or are under way because of the money that has flowed to them.

Mr. Klees: That brings me to the character education program that I believe this minister should be undertaking, because her announcement makes it very clear and leaves the impression that this government today announced a \$1-billion investment. It is not that. As the minister has just admitted, it's a mere 7% of \$1 billion, and her \$4-billion investment that was announced by the previous minister is 7% of that.

Effectively, what I want the minister to do is to admit that what she has announced and what her government has announced is that they are advocating that school boards across the province that are already facing deficits are now encouraged by this government to incur a multi-billion dollar debt load that they have no way of carrying. Will the minister admit that?

Hon. Ms. Wynne: What we have done today is two things: We have allowed school boards to have access to a billion dollars so they can build new schools. The second thing we've done is put in place accommodation review guidelines, which boards have been waiting for, that are going to allow boards to value their schools, to look at the value to the students, the value to the community, the value to the employers in the community, so that we can make real what governments have talked about in the past: schools as hubs. How do we value the schools in our communities? How do we make sure the services that are available to the community can be located in the school, can work with the school, schools that have libraries in them, as I was told about in North Bay yesterday? Those are creative solutions that we need

around the province—to keep our schools open, to close schools where it's necessary—and we're allowing schools to do that while we're building new schools.

ALCOHOL AND DRUG TREATMENT

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is to the Premier. Premier, across the province, especially in the GTA, teens are struggling with drugs like never before. The Toronto Star says more youth than ever are getting high every day, using serious street drugs and getting into trouble with the law. Teens who want to break the cycle, you know very well, can't do it alone. But they're not getting the help they need under your government. Publicly funded teen treatment programs are just not there for them, especially in the GTA. Private programs can cost tens of thousands of dollars that teens and their parents simply can't afford. Premier, these kids deserve a second chance. When are you going to address the huge and growing demand for residential drug treatment programs for our youth in trouble?

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I would just take this one second to remind members that they need to address their questions and responses through the Chair. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): Minister of Health Promotion, Speaker.

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): Through the Ministry of Health Promotion, we are pleased to be the primary funder and sponsor of the Focus program. The Ontario Focus Community Program implements activities to address the problems, including misuse of alcohol and other drugs. This government, under the leadership of Premier McGuinty, has provided an additional \$400,000 to provide a variety of community groups that the honourable member is talking about, support to deal with alcohol and drug prevention in the province of Ontario. So, yes, we have to do more, but the Focus program has been widely accepted throughout the province as a very effective grassroots program that deals particularly with young people on alcohol and substance abuse in this province.

Ms. Horwath: The government needs to focus on the problem of drug addictions of youth across the GTA, and a \$400,000 program is just not going to cut it. The reality is the number of youth struggling with addictions is up 20% over the past 15 years. There are two provincially funded residential treatment facilities right now, and both of them have huge waiting lists. The GTA needs residential treatment facilities to help these kids to conquer their addictions and to support them as they try to re-enter the community. If we don't deal with these problems among our youth right now, we're going to be forced to pay for them through increased payments over time, in our social services budgets, in our health budgets, in our justice budgets, and that's just not acceptable. So I ask you again, when are you going to provide the treatment that our youth need, the residential treatment

programs to help them get off these drugs and start to create lives for themselves?

Hon. Mr. Watson: I just want to correct the record. The \$400,000, in fact, is new money. We're actually providing \$2.4 million across the province for the Focus program, including organizations like the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, the Regent Park Focus Program; in Vanier, for instance, Action antidrogue Focus, \$99,000; in northwestern Ontario, in Rainy River, \$94,400. These are programs, as I said, that are in the prevention stage to encourage those young people to stay away from drugs and alcohol, and drug and alcohol abuse. It's a program that has been widely accepted and commended by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. And the fact of the matter is that these are new initiatives that have been brought in by the McGuinty government because we recognize the need to ensure that we put more resources in the front end, preventing these kinds of tragedies taking place, as opposed to waiting for the back end when in many cases, it's too late.

GREENBELT

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I have a question today for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, our government has always been committed to protecting Ontario's precious green space. We made a promise to the people of Ontario to create a greenbelt. In February 2005, our government permanently protected 1.8 million acres around the greater Golden Horseshoe. Throughout this process, however, Mr. Tory and his party opposed preserving our watersheds, opposed preserving our rivers, our forests, our prime agricultural land. They even voted against the creation of a study area, and they voted against the final boundaries. They voted against preserving green space for generations of Ontarians to come.

Minister, what have the people of Ontario told you they think about our greenbelt?

1450

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Let me first of all congratulate this member for his ongoing and outstanding commitment to the greenbelt. He has been right there from the beginning, and he truly believes in it.

It was interesting to read this morning in the Toronto Star that, according to a poll they've taken, 90% of the people in the GTA not only support the greenbelt but think it was absolutely the right thing to do. Of course, they're just echoing something that David Suzuki mentioned to us last year when we created the greenbelt, when he stated: "I congratulate you for recognizing that urban sprawl represents a major negative impact on the environment.... Congratulations on this initiative." He was talking about the greenbelt.

So 90% of the people of the GTA and David Suzuki think the greenbelt is a great idea. What we want to know is: Does Mr. Tory support the greenbelt at this stage or not? Does he think it's a great idea? That's what the people of Ontario want to know.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I again remind members that the question should come through the Speaker.

The member for Oakville.

Mr. Flynn: Speaker, a question through you: Minister, I know in my own riding of Oakville that the preservation of the greenbelt has been seen as a huge victory for generations to come. It's just one measure our government has taken to ensure that Ontarians can enjoy green space now and in the future.

Here we are a year and a half later, and 90% of people asked, as the minister has just told us, support the greenbelt. We obviously still support the greenbelt, but where is Mr. Tory on this issue? He's in the same place he was during the clean water debates: absolutely nowhere. He wants to pave over our green space while our government protects it. His party voted against protecting thousands of acres of prime agricultural land and tender fruit land so farmers can continue to grow the foods we eat.

Minister, would you please expand to the House, under our government's greenbelt initiative, what else has been accomplished?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: In addition to the one million acres that were added to the already existing Niagara Escarpment and the Oak Ridges moraine lands for a total of 1.8 million acres of land, about 100,000 acres of Niagara Peninsula tender fruit and grape specialty crop area was included, and 15,000 acres in the Holland Marsh for that specialty crop area. Of course, we're also supporting the preservation of the natural-heritage system for about three quarters of the lakes, wetlands and forests within the greenbelt. We extended greenbelt protection to the sensitive parts of the Rouge River watershed in Richmond Hill. All of this is being done under the auspices of the Greenbelt Council currently and the Greenbelt Foundation.

We think it's absolutely the right thing to do for generations to come. We think that our children's children will thank us for this absolutely outstanding achievement of a greenbelt in the GTA.

TORONTO EXPO 2015

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Tourism, unaccustomed as he may be. I think he's probably close by.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Do you want to stand it down or—he is appearing.

The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: I thought the minister was looking a bit left out.

Minister, we're down to three days left before the bidding deadline for a Toronto world's fair bid in 2015. Earlier this year in March, the minister said that he thought such an event would be great for Toronto and great for Ontario, and he said the McGuinty government would be in support.

Now the bid is struggling. I don't think there's anyone here who would support any government in this country

writing a blank cheque, but there also doesn't seem to be anybody in the McGuinty government who even appears to be using every possible effort with every possible minute that's left to see if we can find a solution and save the bid.

Milan and the Turkish bidders seem to have their act together. My question is this: What specific actions and initiatives are you prepared to undertake as Ontario's Minister of Tourism in the remaining days to make every effort to make sure we keep the bid alive and see if we can have a proper bid for the world's fair in 2015?

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I'm actually glad that the Leader of the Opposition asked that question, because of course our province has indicated its very strong support for infrastructure matters that have to be dealt with on the waterfront. We have been the ones who have already been in on this. We provided \$125,000 for the feasibility study in 2004 and half of the million dollars for the city's \$2.1-million phase 1 pre-bid study in 2005. We've indicated we're happy to help with marketing. We're happy to help in every way we can, but, as you know, the stumbling block is, shall the people of Ontario write a blank cheque to cover any cost overrun? Our province, as you know, does not have the financial capacity to do that. I know that the federal government had a \$13-billion surplus last time. They may well wish to do that, but if you're saying this province should write a blank cheque for this, I'm very surprised.

Mr. Tory: I very clearly said that no one in this assembly would be arguing that the government of Ontario or any government in Canada should be writing a blank cheque. It may well be that a deal can't be reached, but not to even try is a pathetic abdication of leadership.

It's my understanding that Ontario didn't even have senior level representation, compared to the other two governments at the meeting that took place last Friday. But my question to you is this: With a big boost for tourism, jobs and investment possibly and a hurry-up on infrastructure at stake, don't you think it is worth it for you to do everything possible to show some leadership and get the governments at the table in a room to see if in the next three days we can get something done to save this bid and see if Toronto can be a part of this? Are you just going to drop out altogether and give up? That's not leadership. What are you going to do?

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I go back to the Leader of the Opposition and ask him—because the make or break is on who will write the blank cheque for any cost overruns. If you, as a so-called responsible politician in this province, one who believes in fiscal responsibility, are prepared to write a blank cheque on behalf of the people of this province to ensure that this proceeds, then I'm very surprised by that.

The federal government has the capacity financially to do so. If you think they should do so, you can indicate that to the Prime Minister, but on behalf of the province of Ontario, we cannot responsibly write a blank cheque

to cover this. We will do everything else possible. We've been in discussions with them on an ongoing basis. They did not satisfy the federal government initially with their business plan. We have been at the table all along, but the roadblock is the blank cheque. Are you prepared to write a blank cheque on behalf of the people of this province for any cost overrun? That's the question to you.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. It's a simple question: Do you think the most appropriate place for an adult with a developmental disability is a senior citizens' long-term-care home?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I will say to the member of the third party that people with developmental disabilities have the same rights in Ontario as any other people. If the need is that they go to long-term care, they will, but it's not the approach that we have taken so far.

I will say to the member of the NDP that we have been working very closely with the family, because it's important that these people are placed in the right place in the community, in a group home close to their family and with the full participation of the family. No one will be placed in the community without having all the services they need.

In the supplementary, I will continue to explain the process that has been taken by this government to make sure that these individuals are full participants in the community.

Mr. Prue: Again to the minister: Many people with developmental disabilities and their advocates don't think they should be warehoused in long-term-care homes or facilities. They showed up at ministry round tables to tell you so and to say that people with disabilities should be supported in the communities. But your July 2006 long-term-care home access protocol for adults with a developmental disability says providers should move "individuals with increasing health care needs that they are currently supporting residentially into an appropriate LTC home."

1500

Will you force agencies to go against the best interests of their clients, or will you admit your error and reconsider this regressive protocol?

Hon. Mrs. Meilleur: I'm very surprised to hear comments like this from the member of the third party, because when the parents went into court to object to the closure of the institution, the judge congratulated the government on the approach it took before placing these individuals.

I will say to you that these individuals have the same rights as any Ontarian. The approach that we have been taking is a very personable and caring approach. The family is fully involved in the decision as to where their loved one will go, and no one is placed in the community

without having the full participation and approval of their family. But the main objective is where the best place is for these individuals to go.

WATER QUALITY

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. The members of the NDP and Conservative caucuses now seem to be very proud of the fact that they voted against the Clean Water Act. It's clear: A vote against the Clean Water Act is a vote against clean water. When my constituents hear the members of Conservative caucus almost boastfully saying that they voted against the Clean Water Act, they just don't understand. They obviously are not in touch with rural Ontario. I'm wondering if perhaps they were confused in what they were doing.

The Clean Water Act is all about protection. It seems to me that this is the very point of the act, and they just don't get it. Minister, will you lay out in the simplest of terms exactly what the Clean Water Act does so my friends in Her Majesty's loyal opposition will understand and stop staying with pride that they voted—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The question's been asked.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I want to thank the member for her championing of the issues on behalf of all Ontarians, particularly rural Ontarians.

The members of the NDP and Conservative caucuses have chosen to vote in the clearest of terms against the single most important recommendation that came out of Justice O'Connor's recommendations. Twelve recommendations will be met directly by the Clean Water Act, and the act itself speaks to the operational implementation of 22 recommendations.

A vote against the Clean Water Act is a vote against prevention. It's a vote against an act which will be providing Ontarians with some of the best-protected drinking water in all of North America. It's an act which is leading the way in jurisdictions right around the world as to our approach to source water protection, because the most effective way to ensure that Ontarians have clean, safe drinking water is to keep it clean in the first place.

Mrs. Mitchell: Thank you for explaining to the members of the NDP and Conservative caucuses what they voted against. But by voting against the recommendations of the Walkerton inquiry, it's clear they're flip-flopping and playing politics with our water. Instead of listening to the hard-working families in rural Ontario, the members of the Conservative caucus have decided to ignore what rural Ontarians want and deserve.

I heard that you met with the members of the advisory panel—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: The members for Oxford and Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound will come to order.

Member for Huron–Bruce.

Mrs. Mitchell: I heard that you met with the members of the advisory panel of the Ontario drinking water stewardship program yesterday, and I'm very thrilled to know that there are several rural representatives on this panel. It's proof that our government listens to rural Ontarians and wants them to play an active role in protecting our water.

Since the Conservative caucus members have no interest in accurately informing their constituents about how the passing of the Clean Water Act is good for rural Ontarians, can you tell rural Ontarians more about this important piece of legislation?

Hon. Ms. Broten: I'm very pleased to relate to this House that I did have an opportunity to meet with the Ontario drinking water stewardship panel yesterday. That panel comprises 11 representatives, many of them from rural Ontario: Al Lauzon, the chair, a University of Guelph professor and past chair of the Ontario Rural Council; Ron Bonnett, president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture; Dale Cowan, the director of the Ontario Agri Business Association; John Maaskant of the Chicken Farmers of Ontario, chair of the Ontario Farm Animal Council and co-chair of the Ontario Farm Environmental Coalition; and many other members who will help our government examine and deliver the \$7 million in stewardship funding that has been put in place, \$5 million of which will be allocated to support action to protect land and water surrounding municipal water wells and surface water intake, and \$2 million to support local outreach programs so that we can deliver clean, safe drinking water right across the province, something that the opposition obviously—

The Speaker: New question.

AGRICULTURE PROGRAMS

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): A question to the Minister of Agriculture: On October 18, 2005, during estimates you said, “The CAIS program has not met their needs.” You were referring to grain and oilseed farmers. On November 23 last year, you said, “Their needs are not being met by the business risk management program that's in place at the present time.” And on April 7, this spring, you said, “All provinces recognize that CAIS is not working well.”

Minister, you've talked about the need to transform CAIS. The only transformation we've seen is your disappearing act of late. Where is the analysis the Ontario Federation of Agriculture requested on farm income if NISA was still in place? Has that analysis been done?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I'm very happy to have an opportunity to correct the record for the honourable member and to speak about CAIS and how our government is working with our colleague ministers from across Canada to improve the CAIS program.

In 2005, we acted very swiftly to replace the deposit that was required of those who were going to participate,

and it has now been replaced with a fee. That's what they wanted. We also announced that we are amending the formula to make negative margins coverable under this program. Another thing that we did just in September came at a cost of some \$96 million, but we did adjust inventory valuations for the program. This is something that was identified by producers. Not all provincial governments across Canada have done this, but we have. At our last meeting in June, again with respect to CAIS, our provincial ministers said that they want to look at—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

Mr. Barrett: Minister, please don't tell us about changing the method for inventory evaluation. That's old news. That was four months late as it was. You've had three years to get this right. Farmers are getting tired of being tricked on this file. Don McCabe of the OFA says, “We need to see immediate action.” OFA president Bonnett states, “Workable proposals to rectify inequities have been repeatedly put forward but ignored by governments.”

Just what is this transformation, Minister? Some questions: Are you funding a risk management program for cash crop? Are you bringing back NISA for farmers? What about self-directed production insurance for hort.? What is the transformation? What are you doing?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I'm very happy to stand in this House and remind the honourable member—I find it interesting you are quoting Ron Bonnett today when just the question before, our member cited Ron Bonnett, the president of the OFA, and you laughed at him. Shame on you.

What our government has committed to do with respect to business risk management for farmers—in our budget document, we said that this government remains committed to a multi-year strategy that will stabilize and strengthen the agriculture industry, but it does require the federal government's participation. And let me remind the honourable member that a few weeks ago, when the federal government had a \$13-billion surplus, they put it in the bank. They didn't assign one cent to farmers or to risk management programs. So if you want to talk about people stepping aside from the issue, you call your federal member.

The Speaker: New question.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The leader of the third party is waiting to ask his question.

1510

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Forest-sector communities across northern Ontario have been devastated by the McGuinty government's misguided hydro rate policy, your policy of driving hydro rates through the roof. The northern Ontario Forestry Coalition says that a total of 25,000 direct and indirect jobs are being destroyed as a

result of your misguided hydro rate policy. The latest casualty is St. Marys Paper of Sault Ste. Marie, which filed for bankruptcy protection last Thursday. The question is this: Is your government going to act to reduce industrial hydro rates for the forest products sector in northern Ontario, or are you going to destroy an additional 400 direct jobs at St. Marys Paper in Sault Ste. Marie?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): I'm pleased to inform the House that the Independent Electricity System Operator now points out that the industrial price of electricity is lower today than when this government took office three years ago.

We acknowledge that there is a challenge for the forestry sector, and this government has responded with a \$1-billion investment that is applied across the north, particularly in the northwest. We remain committed to working with those communities.

It's because of the steps we undertook three years ago, steps that member voted against—you know, he's really interesting. He voted against putting a price cap on power and then he voted against taking it off. He's been all over the map on it.

I've got to tell you, the only way to lower price in electricity is to increase the supply of electricity or to decrease the demand for it. We're doing both: a \$13-billion investment in the energy sector that's resulting in lower power prices.

I say to the member, unlike the 40% price increase you inflicted on this province, the industrial price of electricity is—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Hampton: I'm not surprised that the Premier doesn't want to answer this question. After all, it was the Premier who spoke to northern municipal leaders, now about seven months ago, and said that the McGuinty government was going to look at reducing hydro rates. But since then, thousands more jobs have been destroyed in the northern Ontario forest sector.

Premier, you know what northern Ontario municipal leaders, union leaders and forest sector leaders asked of your government. They said, reduce the hydro rate for the forest products sector to 4.5 cents a kilowatt hour, all fees and charges included. St. Marys, in their press release, said that your misguided policy of driving hydro rates through the roof was a major factor in driving them to seek bankruptcy protection.

My question to the Premier is this: When are you going to act on what you said in Thunder Bay? When are you going to reduce hydro rates for the forest products sector—

The Speaker: Thank you. The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: A skill-testing question for the House: Who was it that in 2002 said regional pricing wouldn't work? In fact, what did he say? Here's what someone said—a skill-testing question for the member,

who lacks any skill when it comes to electricity. He said, "This essentially means that the one-price system we've always had, the system that says we're all equal citizens of Ontario, would be gone.... It means some consumers should be prepared to get whacked over the head." He opposed that then; now he's changed his mind.

Let me tell you what we've done. We have increased the supply of electricity and decreased the price of electricity. Unlike that member opposite, whose government cancelled conservation programs, we have embraced them in a terrific way. In terms of the forest sector industry, \$1 billion in investments to protect the northern economy, to protect the men and women who draw their incomes—

The Speaker: Thank you.

PETITIONS

LANDFILL

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there is currently a proposal to more than double the size of the Carp landfill in west Ottawa; and

"Whereas this site has been in operation for some 30 years and had been expected to close in 2010; and

"Whereas the surrounding community has grown rapidly for the past 10 years and is continuing to grow; and

"Whereas other options to an expanded landfill have yet to be considered; and

"Whereas the municipal councillors representing this area ... and the MPP, Norm Sterling, all oppose this expansion;

"We, the undersigned, support our local representatives and petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure the Minister of the Environment does not approve the expansion of the Carp landfill and instead finds other waste management alternatives."

COMMUNITY MEDIATION

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It has been sent to me by Wayne Browning and Gillian Taylor from Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services; they're some of the 50,000 clients of ICNSS every year. It reads as follows:

"Whereas many types of civil disputes may be resolved through community mediation delivered by trained mediators, who are volunteers working with the parties in the dispute; and

"Whereas Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services established the Peel Community Mediation Service in 1999 with support from the government of Ontario through the Trillium Foundation, the Rotary Club of Mississauga West and the United Way of Peel,

and has proven the viability and success of community mediation; and

"Whereas the city of Mississauga and the town of Caledon have endorsed the Peel Community Mediation Service, and law enforcement bodies refer many cases to the Peel Community Mediation Service as an alternative to a court dispute; and

"Whereas court facilities and court time are both scarce and expensive, the cost of community mediation is very small, and the extra expense incurred for lack of community mediation in Peel region would be much greater than the small annual cost of funding community mediation;

"Be it therefore resolved that the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of the Attorney General, support and fund the ongoing service delivery of the Peel Community Mediation Service through Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services."

This is an excellent petition. I am pleased to sign and support it and to ask page Adam to carry it for me.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I am pleased to present a petition on clean water. It may explain one of the questions in the House today. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas every Ontarian wants the best water quality possible; and

"Whereas the goal of clean water can be achieved effectively through amendments to existing legislation; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals are determined to hammer through the flawed legislation known as the Clean Water Act; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals have failed to put in place adequate, stable, long-term funding into" Bill 43; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals have failed to effectively address the numerous problems in the bill; and

"Whereas rural Ontario stands to suffer significantly under this poorly-thought-out policy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To not pass Bill 43 (the Clean Water Act) until proper funding and amendments are in place."

I am pleased to present this on behalf of Megan Doherty of Peterborough, Martin Dinnisson of Kapuskasing and other people from the province of Ontario.

FAIR ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): Speaker, thank you very much for recognizing me. I keep getting petitions on Bill 124 in support of skilled immigrants. The Minister of Citizenship is here to listen to this. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government is committed to establishing measures that will break down barriers for Ontario newcomers; and

"Whereas these measures will ensure that the 34 regulatory professions in Ontario have admissions and application practices that are fair, clear and open; and

"Whereas these measures will include the establishment of a fairness commissioner and an access centre for internationally trained individuals; and

"Whereas, through providing a fair and equitable system, newcomers will be able to apply their global experience, which will not only be beneficial to their long-term career goals, but also to the Ontario economy as a whole;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"That all members of the House support the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006, Bill 124, and work to ensure its prompt passage in the Ontario Legislature."

I'm delighted to affix my signature to this petition, because I—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Petitions, the member for Ottawa—Orléans.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean—Carleton): Nepean—Carleton.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Nepean—Carleton.

Ms. MacLeod: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look a lot like the member for Ottawa—Orléans, eh?

1520

HEALTH PREMIUMS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean—Carleton): In any event, "We Call on the Government of Ontario to Eliminate the Health Tax....

"Whereas, according to the Department of National Defence, there are over 30,000 serving military personnel calling Ontario home; and

"Whereas, according to the most recent census data, there are more than 1.6 million senior citizens over the age of 65 living in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario plans on eliminating this illegitimate tax for all Ontarians after it forms government in 2007; and

"Whereas, as an interim measure, the illegitimate health tax should be removed from those who protect Canada and those who have built Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, call on the government of Ontario to immediately eliminate the illegitimate health tax, beginning with serving military personnel and senior citizens."

I approve of this, and I will affix my signature.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas Scarborough Southwest is a growing community dependent on public transit to move people around;

"Whereas the city of Toronto and the Toronto Transit Commission are calling for and predicting continued growth in Scarborough Southwest over the next 25 years;

"Whereas the Toronto Transit Commission, in its growth plan, has called for the expansion of subway service to cover more of Scarborough;

"Whereas the government of Ontario has traditionally assisted the city of Toronto in funding subway expansion as recently as the Sheppard subway expansion project;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to work in concert with the city of Toronto and come up with a funding arrangement to assist in expanding subway service to Scarborough."

I agree with this petition, affix my signature to it and give it to page Jasmine, who is here with me today.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have more petitions I've received to do with hydro line maintenance. It reads: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Hydro One Networks Inc. provides hydro to many communities in the region of Parry Sound–Muskoka; and

"Whereas there have recently been several lengthy power outages in this region affecting both private residences, schools and businesses; and

"Whereas rural customers pay among the highest distribution and delivery charges for electricity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Energy and the Ontario Energy Board require Hydro One Networks Inc. to make improvements in line maintenance and forestry management in the region of Parry Sound–Muskoka to ensure reliable energy for its customers."

I support this petition and affix my signature.

HEALTH PREMIUMS

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): This one is titled "We Call on the Government of Ontario to Eliminate the Health Tax

"To the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas, according to the Department of National Defence, there are over 30,000 serving military personnel calling Ontario home; and

"Whereas, according to the most recent census data, there are more than 1.6 million senior citizens over the age of 65 living in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario plans on eliminating this illegitimate tax for all Ontarians after it forms government in 2007; and

"Whereas, as an interim measure, the illegitimate health tax should be removed from those who protect Canada and those who have built Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, call on the government of Ontario to immediately eliminate the illegitimate health tax, beginning with serving military personnel and senior citizens."

I wholeheartedly support this petition and affix my signature.

LANDFILL

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean–Carleton): This is on behalf of my constituents in Nepean–Carleton.

"Whereas there is currently a proposal to more than double the size of the Carp landfill in west Ottawa; and

"Whereas this site has been in operation for some 30 years and had been expected to close in 2010; and

"Whereas the surrounding community has grown rapidly for the past 10 years and is continuing to grow; and

"Whereas other options to an expanded landfill have yet to be considered; and

"Whereas the municipal councillors representing this area ..." as well as myself "and the MPP, Norm Sterling, all oppose this expansion;

"We, the undersigned, support our local representatives and petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure the Minister of the Environment does not approve the expansion of the Carp landfill and instead to find other waste management alternatives."

I affix my signature. I support this wholeheartedly.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I've received petitions to do with the Clean Water Act. This petition reads:

"Amend the Clean Water Act

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas every Ontarian wants the best water quality possible; and

"Whereas the goal of clean water can be achieved effectively through amendments to existing legislation; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals are determined to hammer through the flawed legislation known as the Clean Water Act; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals have failed to put in place adequate, stable, long-term funding into the bill; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals have failed to effectively address the numerous problems in the bill; and

"Whereas rural Ontario stands to suffer significantly under this poorly thought out policy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To not pass Bill 43 (the Clean Water Act) until proper funding and amendments are in place."

PROPERTY RIGHTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean–Carleton): This is a very important issue to my constituents in Nepean–Carleton.

“Whereas the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is silent on property rights; and

“Whereas the Alberta Bill of Rights specifically protects the right to the enjoyment of property; and

“Whereas the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms provides that ‘Every person has a right to the peaceful enjoyment and free disposition of his property, except to the extent provided by law’; and

“Whereas ownership rights should not be abridged or usurped without due process of law; and

“Whereas owners of all lands affected by expropriation should have the right to be included as parties to a required inquiry to consider the merits of the objectives of the expropriating authority; and

“Whereas the decision of an expropriating authority should be subject to judicial review; and

“Whereas, subject to specific limitations of law, the right to peaceful enjoyment of one’s land must be recognized by Ontario law;

“We, the undersigned, petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To pass Bill 57, the Land Rights and Responsibilities Act, 2006.”

Since I spoke in favour of and voted for that bill, I affix my signature.

CAFETERIA FOOD GUIDELINES

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas childhood obesity rates have tripled over the past two decades in Canada; and

“Whereas the annual amount of money the health care system uses to mend preventable obesity-related illnesses is \$1.6 billion; and

“Whereas the Ontario food premises regulation only provides safety policies that must be followed by the Ontario school boards’ cafeterias, but no defined regulations regarding the nutrition standard of the food being served at the cafeterias; and

“Whereas there is a need to encourage nutritious standards in high school cafeterias that support Canada’s Guidelines for Healthy Eating; and

“Whereas the private member’s bill proposed by Nupur Dogra under Making the Grade and her fellow students at Iroquois Ridge High School will require all Ontario school boards’ cafeterias to adopt and abide [by] healthier eating standards (similar to Canada’s Guidelines for Healthy Eating) that will govern the food choices;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the private member’s bill that will amend the Ontario school boards’ cafeteria food guide-

lines to follow healthier food standards in all Ontario high school cafeterias.”

IMMIGRANTS’ SKILLS

Ms. Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

“Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent, arbitrary and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

“Whereas action by Ontario’s trades and professions could remove many such barriers, but Ontario’s trades and professions have failed to recognize that such structural barriers exist, much less to take action to remove them, and to provide fair, timely, transparent and cost-effective access to trades and professions for new Canadians trained outside Canada;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Ontario Legislative Assembly urge the members of all parties to swiftly pass Bill 124, the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006, and to require Ontario’s regulated professions and trades to review and modify their procedures and qualification requirements to swiftly meet the needs of Ontario’s employers, Ontario’s newcomers and their own membership, all of whom desperately need the very skills new Canadians bring working for their organizations, for their trades and professions, and for their families.”

I completely agree with this and will sign it.

1530

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES ACT, 2006 (NO. 2)

LOI DE 2006 SUR LES MESURES
BUDGÉTAIRES (NO 2)

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 30, 2006, on the motion for second reading of Bill 151, An Act to enact various 2006 Budget measures and to enact, amend or repeal various Acts / Projet de loi 151, Loi édictant diverses mesures énoncées dans le Budget de 2006 et édictant, modifiant ou abrogeant diverses lois.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean–Carleton): I’m pleased to kick off today’s debate for the Budget Measures Act, the second act stemming from the 2006 Ontario budget.

The PC finance critic, my good friend from Erie-Lincoln, will be speaking to this bill tomorrow night, on his birthday no less, as a deferred lead. I'm sure he will present the Legislature with a very detailed and thorough presentation.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, around six months ago, shortly after the March 30 by-election, I gave my inaugural speech in this place. In fact, my inaugural speech was regarding the original budget bill. Members may recall I ran on the heels of the by-election budget, a smoke-and-mirrors show by the McGuinty Liberals to buy votes off the electorate using the electorate's own money. Of course, we know how this worked; in fact, it didn't work. That is why I'm joined here by my colleagues and friends the members from Whitby-Ajax and Toronto-Danforth, who also ran in the by-election.

At the time of my inaugural speech, on April 18, 2006, I indicated to this chamber the points of view of the people of Nepean-Carleton. As you will agree, the people of Whitby-Ajax, Toronto-Danforth and Nepean-Carleton all had a direct voice on how they viewed this McGuinty budget. I informed the Legislature last April that the people of Nepean-Carleton viewed the budget with cynicism. I told this place:

"When a government spends itself purposely into deficit when it should be in the black and continues to tax Ontarians, the people of Nepean-Carleton are justifiably concerned. When a government takes a \$2.4-billion tax hike in an illegitimate McGuinty health tax—a tax ... on hard-working families—and then the government claims to provide better health care yet has spent millions of that health tax outside the health sector, you will understand that families are understandably upset. When a government has the audacity to call its leader the education Premier while college professors are on strike and thousands of students are fretting over a lost school year, it is more than reasonable for parents, students and college professors to demand that their government take some leadership on a crisis that you'll remember only came to a head as election day drew near. These are the very sorts of issues that condemned the scandal-ridden federal Liberal Party out of office and into defeat."

Mr. Speaker, you know all too well that my party has opposed each of the budgets of this government. That is because we fundamentally oppose the high taxes, high hydro rates, and runaway-spending nature of this McGuinty government. The McGuinty Liberals have over \$6 billion more in revenue than they said they needed in the last election campaign in order to keep their plentiful promises. It is time they reduced the burden of taxes on Ontario's working families, seniors and businesses. This budget lacks tax relief for the working families and seniors of Ontario. The McGuinty government has approximately \$6 billion in surplus, as compared to their election fiscal plan, yet continues to condemn working families to paying \$2,000 more in taxes, user fees and hydro costs than they did before the last election.

Last May, when I asked this Legislature to join me in supporting my motion to eliminate the illegitimate health tax for seniors and serving military personnel, even

though there was this massive surplus, the Liberals voted against it. That's shameful. Why does the McGuinty government have such disdain for working Ontarians? Even though the dollars were there and with a good, clear conscience we could have given a hand to our seniors living on a fixed income and to our soldiers sacrificing their lives for us in Afghanistan, who are not even covered under OHIP, this Liberal government voted against them. There is still no plan for this Liberal government to repeal their illegitimate health tax, the single biggest promise of this government. The Premier looked into the camera and promised Ontarians he would not raise taxes, but he did it anyway.

In fact, the only reason the McGuinty Liberals had to break their promise on taxes is that they also broke a promise on spending restraint. Their own public accounts prove that, in 2006, they spent a massive \$5.7 billion more than they promised in the fiscal plan released during the 2003 election. The Premier claimed, when he implemented the health tax on the middle class, that it was needed—needed—to pay for his promises in health and education, but the public accounts prove that's just not true. He needed \$2.4 billion from the so-called health tax on the middle class in this province to fund that broken spending promise and still balance the budget.

That being said, provincial revenue without the health tax was actually \$2.7 billion more than he counted on in his election promise, and the last budget still wasn't balanced. That will be just another in a long line of saying anything just to get and stay elected.

The McGuinty Liberals tried to use the report of former auditor Erik Peters to say that there was a permanent or structural deficit and that they needed a permanent tax on the middle class to deal with it, but Mr. Peters never said there was a structural deficit. In fact, \$4.4 billion of the potential \$5.6-billion deficit he identified was in revenue shortfalls, mainly because of one-time factors. Let me read them to you. In fact, most of the circumstances he cited were one-time events. These one-time events included \$961 million in lower crown corporation revenues because of SARS and the blackout; \$1.16 billion in lower tax revenues due to SARS and the sudden appreciation in the dollar; \$720 million in SARS-related health spending; and \$130 million in tourism tax breaks after SARS.

Peters also assumed that the \$771 million in increased transfers from the then federal Liberal government would not flow. In reality, a few months later, the federal transfers flowed as outlined in the Eves budget. Peters accepted the Liberal assumption that there wouldn't be any of the estimated \$300 million in year-end savings, even though the Liberals included at least that much in year-end savings in every subsequent budget and have actually increased it steadily until it reached \$700 million in the 2006-07 budget.

Now, the so-called health tax wasn't to meet their spending promises. After all, if the McGuinty Liberals had kept their spending promises, they would have eliminated that health tax last year and still would have

had a surplus of over \$2 billion. Speaking of breaking the promise on fiscal restraint, if there's one thing that characterizes the McGuinty government more than anything else, it's broken promises: broken promises on energy costs; broken promises on coal plants; broken promises on private hospitals. In my own constituency, the Royal Ottawa Hospital: we campaigned, of course, in 2003 to build that hospital; they, on the other side, campaigned against it. I remember being at the rally that said, "Save our hospital. We will build this hospital." But they were too afraid. They flip-flopped and broke their promise, and now that hospital, of course, is flourishing like it should be.

They broke their promises on taxes, as I've just said, broken promises that have hurt hard-pressed families right across Ontario, and today, we add one more to the list: Dalton McGuinty's broken promise to restrain spending. Over the past three years, under the McGuinty Liberals' watch, program spending has increased by an average of 8.4% while the economy was growing at 4.4% GDP, and this when times were good. What we are seeing now is more of the same runaway, out-of-control Liberal spending, but now the economy is slowing and good jobs are disappearing.

We've seen this before. Government spending that exceeds the growth of the economy simply isn't sustainable. It doesn't protect jobs, and it doesn't help real families cope with economic uncertainty. Mr. McGuinty simply cannot break his spending restraint promise by almost \$6 billion and still have an attractive business climate at a time, by the government's own reckoning, that we need it the most to encourage investment and help save good-paying jobs.

This is a major disconnect between McGuinty's spending and real people's lives, the people we represent on the floor of this Legislature.

1540

As I said in my inaugural speech, during the by-election budget, the people of Nepean-Carleton were given an opportunity to judge the McGuinty government and its priorities against their values, and they resoundingly rejected this government, its priorities and its ever-convenient by-election budget. Nowhere in the budget were self-reliance, strong families or safer streets. In fact Nepean-Carleton and the city of Ottawa weren't valued at all. Instead, we saw a budget from the GTA where \$244 million was taken out of the agriculture budget and \$82 million was taken from the children and youth services ministry. There were no new infrastructure funding announcements in my city of Ottawa and no new long-term-care beds, which we desperately need in our city.

The McGuinty government did little to offer the people of Nepean-Carleton strong leadership in that budget and they did nothing to offer the farmers in my community solutions to the crisis on the family farm, whether they are from Greely, Richmond, Osgoode or Metcalfe. Farmers have all been forgotten by this government, and we see that each and every day with different pieces of legislation.

The McGuinty government also did nothing to offer young families like mine who live in Stittsville, Barrhaven, Manotick and Greely, a better way to make ends meet. Instead, families like mine with young children are paying over \$2,000 more in taxes since this government took office.

The McGuinty government did nothing to offer patients reduced wait times. In fact, each week in this Legislature, I raise the issue of long-term-care beds and the crisis that's evolving in my city because we are short, as I have mentioned repeatedly, 850 long-term-care beds, and they're doing nothing about it—absolutely nothing—three years into their mandate; just a pittance of funding, only after it's raised in this Legislature.

This is a government addicted to spending but without a plan. There's no accountability, no guarantee that we ever get value for money. Rather, they recklessly spend on items that are meaningless to the people of Ontario and certainly to the people of Nepean-Carleton.

Let me illustrate how the crowd opposite recklessly spends our money: \$6 million to drop the C from OLCG; \$20 million for raises for Liberal appointees on government agencies and boards; \$100 million for partisan government advertising; \$91 million to fire nurses; \$219,000 to pay Liberal ad firms to redraw our trillium—a trillium logo, I might add, that made it through 42 years, seven governments and three major political parties, yet members opposite believe they are above an institution that has served this province for over 42 years. That is the blatant disrespect they not only have for Ontario's institutions but for Ontario's voters and taxpayers. This government is out of touch, spending ridiculous amounts of money while thousands of hard-pressed Ontarians can barely keep up with the bills.

This bill implements measures contained in the 2006 Ontario budget that was presented to the Legislature by the former Minister of Finance, Dwight Duncan, on March 23, 2006. Nothing has changed since the seven days preceding that by-election budget. As I said, on April 18, my people had a choice between a McGuinty government that cuts and slashes the agriculture budget or the Progressive Conservative Party that defends the family farm, and they chose the Progressive Conservative Party, the party of rural Ontario, and they'll do it again on October 4, 2007. The families of Nepean-Carleton had a choice between the fiscal irresponsibility of this Liberal government or the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario that demands balanced budgets and scrapping an unaccountable tax on families. That's what they're going to get on October 4, 2007.

Last March, they chose fiscal accountability and sent a Progressive Conservative to Queen's Park because families like mine need a break. They need to make sure that the health tax is not in the government's pocket, because it's going to anything and everything but health care in this province. You can tell when you're looking at surgical wait times in my city, which are the highest on average in all of Ontario, when you look at the wait times at CHEO, which I know the members opposite are

hanging their heads about right now, because the children in Ottawa are waiting, on average, one year to get spinal surgery. We don't have that type of time for young children who are developing. We don't have a year to wait. The platitudes—

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): Send us the cheque.

Ms. MacLeod: Yes, “Send us the cheque.” That’s what they’re asking right now, if we can just send a cheque to the Liberal Party of Ontario so they can continue to spend your money recklessly. But seniors in Nepean–Carleton had a choice, too, between a McGuinty government that creates more bureaucracy—not more doctors, not more nurses and not reduced waiting times—with its local health integration networks or the Progressive Conservative Party, the party that wants to explore new options in health care so we can put patients and seniors—not more red tape—first. I’m begging them today, if they want to fix that long-term health crisis in Ottawa right now, do it. You can take the credit for it. I can just keep raising it every single day in this Legislature, but fix the problem. Eight hundred and fifty beds—if you want to do it, I encourage you to do it.

This government lost credibility on day one with the everyday hard-working Ontarian and the everyday person who lives in Ottawa, because they’re struggling to pay the bills and there is absolutely no improvement in their life whatsoever. When a government claims a deficit but has a surplus, and yet continues to tax families, just as this government does, people lose faith in their institutions and their representatives.

The people of Nepean–Carleton are not alone in judging the Budget Measures Act. The fine people of Whitby–Ajax, Toronto–Danforth and so many more areas across this province—we recently had a by-election, and they have the same lack of faith in the Premier’s view of where we should be taking Ontario. Rather, it’s the opposition parties that have benefited from it, because, actually, we on this side of the Legislature speak for the people of Ontario.

Bill 151 does nothing but leave a ticking time bomb of property tax increases for Ontario’s homeowners; families that just cannot take yet another tax hike; families that heard, “I won’t raise your taxes,” and then thought perhaps a politician might be honest. Little did they know.

The amendments to the Assessment Act will result in three-year assessment increases hitting Ontario property taxpayers in a single year. But wait, the increase will not come into effect until after the next provincial election—just like everything else, dithering and delaying; putting it off until after the next provincial election. Whether it’s the municipal review, whether it’s our property assessments, whether it’s virtually anything, they have undefined timelines, goals and objectives, just so they can say anything and do anything to stay in the seats they’re in. That didn’t work for the federal Liberals and, sadly for my friends opposite, it’s not going to work for them.

Whether it’s increasing the Liberal-appointed LCBO board members—actually, we might have to wait and see

if it’s going to be the LCB, because by the time this bill goes through, they might want to drop the O just so they can give another Liberal ad firm a handsome contract—or giving more sweeping powers to the Canadian Public Accountability Board, giving them more and more access to confidential and privileged information, while the Ontario Bar Association and the Certified General Accountants Association are left concerned about this.

Just like the 2003 election platform, just like the Liberal Red Book, just like every Liberal election document in the last 20 years, all we have here in this Budget Measures Act is saying anything and doing anything to stay elected. The voters of Nepean–Carleton and I would like to know, why did the McGuinty Liberals even bother with bills like this? With budgets at all? Because all they’re going to do is ignore them.

Before I close, I’d like to go through a couple of media clippings here and talk about what the people across Ontario, particularly the press, are saying about this budget. Let’s talk about the Ontario Bar Association: “However, the pressing matter at hand as this bill is now before the House for second reading debate, is the matter of solicitor-client privilege. Given that this is a fundamental principle for our profession, it is disappointing that there was no contact with relevant stakeholder groups in the legal profession for input in the development of this legislation.” I ask my colleague to the left of me here from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, have we heard “lack of consultation” before with this government? Have we heard that before?

I want to go to the Toronto Star editorial. They always have something entertaining to say.

“Sorbara portrayed the downturn as ‘a bridge to a new cycle of expansion within an economy that is fundamentally strong.’”

“Because of this rather sanguine outlook for the projected economic slowdown, Sorbara clearly sees no need for much of a response. He proposes to put a somewhat greater focus on services and programs to help job-threatened or laid-off workers; to fast-track a number of infrastructure projects; to encouraging interprovincial trade; and to launch a new campaign to persuade Ontarians to vacation in the province.”

While the first two elements of that package may provide some relief over the next 12 months, it adds up to very little. This is another one of their smoke-and-mirrors games here, where they delay and dither and have all of these grandiose plans but they never really materialize to very much, aside from, of course, picking fights with the federal government, because that’s what they do best.

1550

Another excerpt from the Toronto Star: “Despite the continuing failure to balance the budget—spending is up \$913 million to a record \$88 billion in 2006-07—the government enjoys an additional \$190 million in proceeds from the Teranet land registry that will be spent on new initiatives.” Instead of trying to balance the budget or eliminate the deficit, they’re just going to spend it on new initiatives.

"Economist Hugh Mackenzie said the Liberals promised to be more compassionate to the poor. However, when inflation is factored in, those on social assistance are actually worse off today than when the Liberals were elected." They're hanging their heads again. As we heard from my colleague the leader of the third party here today, talking about the amount of money this government has for affordable housing, they're not injecting it into affordable housing. I'm sure he'd like to comment on this when I finish speaking.

As I close, because I notice I have about 30 seconds left, I'll just finish with this: "Dalton McGuinty was terrific in 2003. He improved in every way from [the 1990 election] and he deserved to win and we deserved to win," says one senior Liberal. 'But that platform was a disaster. We tried to be all things to all people. And now we're paying for it.'" That's from the Toronto Star's Robert Benzie and Mr. Ferguson. There you have it: Even Liberals are ashamed of this plan and this budget. Come next election, I'm sure they won't be sitting on that side of the Legislature.

Thank you very much. I look forward to their questions.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments on the member's speech?

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I always listen with interest when opposition members comment upon the budget and the budget papers and the budget legislation of the McGuinty government. The one point that stands out in the member's speech is that this is a government that would promise virtually anything and everything before the last election in order to solicit votes. This was a government that said, for example, they were going to fix the flawed and inadequate school funding formula, but, as the member pointed out, if we go across Ontario we find that the flawed and inadequate school funding formula has not been fixed. We still see schools taking money out of the special education budget or out of the English-as-a-second language budget and using it to pay the hydro bill. Of course the board knows that unless you pay the hydro bill, the school can't function. You won't have heat, you won't have light, you won't have anything to power much of the equipment.

Similarly, in terms of the property tax system, I remember the now Premier saying that the property tax system was broken and that he was seized of the issue of fixing it. Well, I think what we have now discovered is that to the McGuinty government, "seized" means seizing it up until after the next election. Nothing is happening to address this whole issue of property tax assessment rates that are skyrocketing and forcing seniors to sell their homes.

For those points, I commend the member.

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): I want to make some comments on Bill 151. I want to make clear that Bill 151 will assist the changes that we in Ontario have been asking for, that is, to have a strong community and a prosperous economy. This bill will assist in that objective. I think we have all been hearing from everyone

that the economy in Ontario and in North America is not predicted to do as well, this year or next year, as it has in the past. Because of that and a number of other reasons, it makes sense that everything we do, as honourable members of this House, is to assist the economy, as much as possible, to perform better than is expected. Again, this bill will go to some degree in assisting that objective. It's an objective that the people of Ontario have made very clear that they want to see happen. It's an objective that, as I said, will give us strong communities, communities that need to be built better, that need to be built stronger. By doing that, it will provide a better and a more prosperous economy, an economy that will benefit the entire province. Because of the size of our province, it will assist and help the Canadian economy because, after all, probably around 43% of the economic activity that takes place in our country comes from Ontario.

Because of this and a number of other reasons which I will certainly spell out later on, I think Bill 151 should have full support.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I want to comment on the speech by the member from Nepean-Carleton. First, I know a lot of people in the area around Ottawa, including Nepean-Carleton, and I've got to tell you, the feedback I get about the kind of job that the relatively new member from Nepean-Carleton is doing is absolutely tremendous and positive. She gets up and speaks for the people who sent her here, unlike many of the people on the opposite side of the House. She commented today about the failure of this government in addressing the problems in our agricultural sector. She commented on the failure of this government, other than in a few areas, to address wait times with regards to medical procedures in this province, particularly with regards to children. There's so much work to be done on that.

I was here yesterday, too, and I listened to the finance minister. I must say that I didn't know whether he really had a budget bill or not, because all he wanted to talk about was this government's propensity to pass the blame and to pass the responsibility for governing this province onto the federal government. For goodness' sake, we elect a government in the province of Ontario. I think the people are well within their rights and their expectations to believe that that government will actually take the responsibility of managing this province seriously and not, every time that it can be shown that they have messed up, run to the federal government and say, "You guys are going to have to fix it now, because we can't."

A case in point is the crisis in Caledonia. The Premier wanted to be the hero in Caledonia. They've been involved since day one in February—long before that, actually—but they have botched it so badly that now they're looking for a way out. What do they do? "We don't have the answers," they say, "so it's up to the federal government." Shame on this government for handing it over to the federal government—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Questions and comments?

Hon. Caroline Di Cocco (Minister of Culture): I'm pleased to rise to speak to the comments of the member from Nepean–Carleton. I wish that the member from Nepean–Carleton would not choose to ignore history quite as easily as she does —

Mr. McMeekin: She doesn't have much history.

Hon. Ms. Di Cocco: —because I want the member to remember that we sat here in this House—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Hon. Ms. Di Cocco: —during those long eight years when I remember—it's fact, and it's the case—that 22,000 acute care beds were gone. They closed.

Mr. McMeekin: You left that part out.

Hon. Ms. Di Cocco: A number of hospitals—

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot, what don't you know about the word "order"? Thank you.

Hon. Ms. Di Cocco: Thank you, Speaker.

They closed 28 hospitals. And the doctor shortage: I remember the Minister of Health, when she was asked in this House in 2002 and again in 2003 the question, "What are we doing about the doctor shortage?" Her response was one of denial, that there was no doctor shortage in this province, that it was a doctor distribution problem. I just indicate that it is very, very difficult to sit here and listen to the comments when I see that history has been, again, just reshaped, conveniently reshaped.

I also say to the leader of the third party that he, too, in 2003 denied that there was a doctor shortage. He indicated again that in 1992, although they cut medical spaces, it was now, in 2003—and I remember hearing him say this—a distribution problem, that we didn't have a doctor shortage.

1600

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Nepean–Carleton has two minutes to respond.

Ms. MacLeod: I really appreciated the comments on the other side because, according to them, just because I was elected by the people of Nepean–Carleton with the highest majority of anyone on this side of the place, because I'm 32 years old and I was elected when I was 31, I don't deserve to be here. That is typical Liberal arrogance and their typical sense of entitlement. They don't care.

To the Minister of Culture, if she wants to talk about history, then she'd be investing in our museums and our historical places all throughout this province. I wrote to her earlier this summer and asked her to give some money to the Nepean Museum, which needs it. I wrote on their behalf, and she gave me a little letter that says, "Not this time, ma'am; not this time."

To the member from Thornhill, to the Minister of Culture and to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, thank you very much for your comments. I appreciated them.

In the last minute that I have, I want to remind these people of the deficit that they pretended they had. Let's talk about the Peters report one more time, just so you

don't forget about it, because you're so into history. In fact, most of the circumstances he cited were one-time events. These one-time events include: \$960 million in lower crown corporation revenues because of SARS and the blackout; \$1.6 billion in lower tax revenues due to SARS and the sudden appreciation in the dollar; \$720 million in SARS-related health spending; and \$130 million in tourism tax breaks after SARS.

All these guys can do is blame the ghosts of Parliaments past—and how appropriate that they're doing it again today on Halloween—and they're going to continue to finger point, which has become my favourite source of entertainment in this Legislature, the pointing at the Harper government.

Give us all a break. It's all your fault. You guys have broken the 50 promises; you guys are taxing and spending out of control; you guys are the people who are dickering around with Ontario's institutions, without the people of Ontario even asking for it. Do your job, stop pointing the fingers and lower our taxes.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member for Kenora–Rainy River and leader of the third party.

Mr. Hampton: This bill is a budget bill. As it says, it's an omnibus bill dealing with many budgetary items. So I want to raise a number of budgetary items today. I want to raise the budgetary issues that matter to the working families across Ontario that aren't being addressed by this government.

To give you an example, I want to raise the issue that was raised by a number of college and university students who were here in front of Queen's Park just yesterday and who held what might be called a mock funeral; a mock funeral because, for many of them, watching the McGuinty government raise tuition fees by 26% over the next four years is going to mean that a post-secondary education becomes unaffordable. What is really, I think, outrageous about this is that this is the Premier who, before the last election, said that tuition fees are already too high. In 2002, 2003, he said, "Tuition fees are already too high." But now, after the election, this government is going to drive up tuition fees by a further 26%.

I simply ask the question: How are students who come from modest- and middle-income families going to be able to afford this? Those students who were here in front of Queen's Park holding a mock funeral yesterday provided the answer. They said that students coming from modest- and middle-income families simply won't be able to afford these tuition-fee increases. What it will mean is that if they want to get a post-secondary education, they will have to go higher and higher into debt.

We already know that graduates from Ontario, graduates of universities and colleges, already are carrying some of the highest debt loads in Canada compared to any other province. I simply raise this issue.

In contrast to this happening, we know from the budget documents presented by the McGuinty government that in the last year alone, they ran a budget surplus of over \$1.7 billion. You would have thought that a government that says it cares about what's happening to work-

ing families, that says it cares about what's happening to students, could have used some of that \$1.7-billion budget surplus to ensure that tuition fees weren't driven through the roof for college and university students who are already hard-pressed. But despite that \$1.7-billion budget surplus, and despite receiving new federal money which was earmarked to be used to reduce tuition fees, the McGuinty government didn't reduce tuition fees and didn't hold tuition fees stable. Instead, they embarked upon a scheme to jack up university and college tuition fees by 26%. I think that's outrageous, and I know that it is going to create real hardship for a lot of daughters and sons of working families across this province.

Similarly, the whole issue of affordable housing: We know that there are 122,000 families in this province who are on a waiting list for affordable housing, that they're spending more and more of the modest income they have to keep a roof over their kids' heads—122,000 families waiting for affordable housing. The McGuinty government promised to build 20,000 units of affordable housing, but here we are in the fourth year of the McGuinty government. Have they built 20,000 units of affordable housing? No, not even one quarter of that. What is even more outrageous in all of this is that, once again, this is a government that had a \$1.7-billion budget surplus. Did they choose to use any of that money to build affordable housing? No.

This is also a government that is sitting on \$400 million of new additional federal money which was earmarked to build affordable housing. Are they using any of that money to build additional units of affordable housing? No. This is a government that's bankrolling that \$400 million. We saw in the pages of the *Toronto Star*, just in the last week, confirmation that far from using that money to respond to the desperate needs of working families across this province, the McGuinty government has got that money sitting in a bank account. I expect what they're going to use it for is some pre-election announcement to try to make themselves look good on the eve of an election. Meanwhile, 122,000 families are desperate for affordable housing.

In line with that, I want to raise the issue of the poorest children in this province, the lowest-income children in this province. These are children whose income is so low that the federal government directs about \$200 million to those kids and their parents in this province. It's called the national child benefit supplement: \$200 million dollars of federal money goes to those kids and their parents to try to raise their income to a level where they can get by. What does the McGuinty government do? The McGuinty government actually claws back from those poorest kids in Ontario, claws back that \$200 million of federal money that is intended to help the poorest kids, the lowest-income kids, in the province. Once again, this is a government that, last year, had a \$1.7-billion budget revenue surplus. They could have easily eliminated the clawback of this \$200 million of federal money that's intended to go to the lowest-income children in the province. Did they do that, Speaker? No.

With a \$1.7-billion budget revenue surplus, the McGuinty government continues to take \$200 million a year of federal money away from the lowest-income kids in this province. Shameful. Shameful in any context, but especially shameful when the McGuinty government had a \$1.7-billion budget revenue surplus and continues to take that money away from the lowest-income kids in the province.

1610

I want to raise the issue that many seniors across this province confront, seniors who have worked hard all their lives, who have paid, in some cases, 20 years, 25 years of mortgage to own their own homes and to live in their own homes. And now that they are retired and living on a limited or fixed income—a pension income—they're being faced with skyrocketing property tax assessments.

Just in the recent by-election of Parkdale-High Park, as I canvassed door-to-door in that riding, I ran into literally hundreds of seniors who said, "I have done everything that you should as a responsible citizen in society. I worked hard. I raised my kids. I supported them to help them get a start. I paid my taxes. I paid for my home. And now, under this property tax assessment system, I am being forced, literally, to sell my home, because this property tax assessment system is so unfair and so ridiculous." Even the provincial Ombudsman has looked at this unfair and broken property tax system and has denounced it as being unfair, has denounced it in terms of its prejudicial treatment of seniors and property tax owners. And what has the McGuinty government done to assess, to redress this problem? They're not going to do anything. What they're going to do is, they're going to study the problem; they're going to study the problem until after the next election. They're going to allow this injustice to continue.

I know very well what's going to happen to those seniors after the next election. There will be two property assessments from this year and next year, and then the year after the election, they'll all come at once. That's what is going to happen here. This is the age-old Dalton McGuinty promise made before the election—"I'm going to help you after the election"—and then after the election the promise is broken, and people are hit with a huge property tax assessment increase.

When the Dalton McGuinty government had a \$1.7-billion budget surplus last year, and I predict a budget revenue surplus in the current year that we're in, this government could have done something to address those serious injustices, those serious wrongs that we see in the current property tax assessment system, but the McGuinty government chose to do nothing. They chose to continue to put seniors in a position where they're literally forced to sell their homes in order to be able to afford to live, because the property tax assessment level is so high.

I also want to raise the issue of what's going on with hydro rates. I said here earlier today that, literally, boards of education across this province have been forced to raid

their English-as-a-second-language budget, have been forced to raid their special education budget to pay the school hydro bill. Why? Because the McGuinty government has a policy of driving hydro rates through the roof—a 55% increase in hydro rates for residential and institutional buildings like schools, hospitals, homes and apartment buildings.

The minimum wage hasn't increased by 55%. Perhaps the people who have been appointed to boards and commissions by the McGuinty government have had huge increases in their pay, but the majority of working families across this province haven't seen a 55% increase in their take-home pay. But they sure see the increase in the hydro bill, and this is creating hardship.

What was the response of the Minister of Energy just a few weeks ago when he was asked in Sudbury—people in northern Ontario have colder winters—what his advice was to those folks in northern Ontario who might have to use electric heat? Do you know what it was? He said, “Well, they should get themselves a bottle of wine and a blanket and find someone to cuddle up to.” That was the McGuinty government's Minister of Energy's advice. That was his advice to low- and modest-income people who are already having trouble paying the hydro bill as a result of the McGuinty government's policy of driving hydro rates through the roof.

But the biggest issue with respect to hydro rates is the tens of thousands of people across northern Ontario who are losing their jobs, their livelihoods, their homes and their community as a result of the McGuinty government's misguided policy of driving hydro rates through the roof. This is what is happening.

Industries that utilize a lot of electricity in the production process—paper mills, pulp mills, mining operations, smelting and refining operations—literally look at the increase in industrial hydro rates that have been forced on them by the McGuinty government and many of them are saying, “Do you know what? We can't afford this. We cannot afford hydro rates at 6.5 cents and seven cents a kilowatt hour in Ontario for our mills and our smelters and our refineries when we can move the mill or the smelter or the refinery to Quebec or Manitoba or British Columbia and pay a much more reasonable hydro rate.”

Do you know what the real travesty is here? Many of these operations in northern Ontario are surrounded—literally surrounded—by hydro dams that produce the lowest-cost electricity, and not just the lowest-cost electricity in Canada, not just the lowest-cost electricity in North America; they're surrounded by power dams that produce some of the lowest-cost electricity in the world. Yet it's McGuinty government policy to force those pulp and paper mills and mining and smelting operations to pay 6.5 cents and seven cents a kilowatt hour for that electricity that's produced right out the back door of their mill or their smelter at the lowest cost in the world.

There are primarily two reasons that the paper industry and the pulp industry and sawmills located in northern

Ontario: (1) some of the best wood fibre in the world, and (2) an affordable and sustainable supply of electricity, some of the most affordable electricity in the world. Those were the two primary reasons why pulp and paper mills and sawmills were established across northern Ontario, and they still see their electricity being produced right out their back door. They see it being produced 20 kilometres away on the river, 30 kilometres away on the river. They still know it's got the lowest production cost in the world, but the McGuinty government says, “You have to pay 6.5 cents and seven cents a kilowatt hour for that electricity that is being produced just outside your mill at one cent a kilowatt hour.” Those companies are simply saying, “We can't do that.”

So what have we seen? We've seen now almost 5,000 direct jobs destroyed in pulp mills, paper mills, sawmills in one-industry communities across northern Ontario. The forestry coalition says that when you add in the multiplier, the indirect jobs that depend on those direct jobs, 25,000 good-paying, family-supporting, community-sustaining jobs have been destroyed by the misguided policy of the McGuinty government to drive hydro rates through the roof. Kenora, Dryden, Thunder Bay, Red Rock, Longlac, Espanola, Sault Ste. Marie, Nairn Centre, Chapleau, Hearst, Smooth Rock Falls, Kapuskasing, Kirkland Lake—dozens of communities where some of the best-paying jobs, jobs that sustain the economy of the whole community, have been eliminated by the McGuinty government.

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All of this could have been prevented; all of this could have been avoided. I remember, two and a half years ago, in the summer of 2004, when the forest sector representatives came here to Queen's Park when the McGuinty government was presenting their electricity policy, Bill 100. The representatives said, “Look, the pulp and paper industry right now is a very competitive industry. We face a number of challenges.” They said to the Minister of Energy and to the McGuinty government backbenchers who sit on the committee, “If you do what is in your policy, if you drive hydro rates up by the amount we see here, you will destroy thousands of jobs in the pulp and paper sector, in the mining and smelting and refining sector in northern Ontario. You will destroy thousands of jobs.” They pleaded with the McGuinty government, they pleaded with the Minister of Energy, they pleaded with McGuinty government backbenchers, “Don't do this. Don't destroy these jobs. Don't deprive all these people of a livelihood. Don't destroy the heart and soul of the economies of these communities.” Yet the McGuinty government pressed ahead and did that. It was all avoidable and preventable. The McGuinty government could have listened and could have adopted a different hydro rate policy, but they didn't. As a result, 25,000 good-paying jobs have been eliminated, and this is an injustice—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I listened closely to the leader of the third party, and one of the

things that's important to get on the record is this issue regarding dollars from the federal government that have left us short. The fact is, the federal government maintains that the trusts it established in its 2006 budget, including the public transit capital trust, the affordable housing trust and the off-reserve aboriginal housing trust, should replace funding promised to the province under the Canada-Ontario agreement. That approach would leave Ontario \$1.1 billion short. Unfortunately, instead of standing with us and standing up to the government in Ottawa, instead of standing with us and standing up, on behalf of all Ontarians, to the Harper government, the Leader of the Opposition chooses to take another tack. I think it's the responsibility of the Leader of the Opposition to stand with us and be strong and speak out for the people of Ontario. We're being ripped off at this point in time. The Harper government owes \$1.1 billion to the people of Ontario, to those who need that money for affordable housing programs, to those who need that money for investment in infrastructure, in transit and in other types of infrastructure.

This government is doing a lot when it comes to building housing, when it comes to helping the vulnerable. We have committed to more than 15,000 new units of affordable housing and 5,000 rent supplements. So far, we've produced 2,500 new units that are occupied, another 2,500 that are under construction, and 1,500 more in the planning and approval stage. That's 6,500 new units so far. We'd love to be able to produce more in this short period of time that we've had, but it does take time to build this stuff. I know this for a fact, because I was chair of community services at the city of Toronto for many, many years when we were the only builders of housing in Toronto. Finally, the McGuinty government's come along and the province is back in the game; the feds were in the game under the Martin government. We all owe it to ourselves to fight for Ontarians and those who require housing.

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): It's my pleasure to add some comments to the speech from the member for Kenora–Rainy River on the budget measures bill, Bill 151. I would like to correct the member from Kenora–Rainy River. He said that the Minister of Energy's advice for northerners about how to face high energy costs was to get a bottle of wine, a blanket and to cuddle with someone. He actually said, "Get a good bottle of red wine." Now, as to how people are supposed to afford that good bottle of red wine when they can't afford their energy bill, you'd have to ask the Minister of Energy about that.

He also told us today in an answer to a question in question period how he's putting his energy policy into effect. He said, "You need to control demand." I think, as was pointed out by the member from Kenora–Rainy River, most businesses in northern Ontario, most of the pulp and paper mills, the sawmills—the users of electricity—are all shutting down. So I guess he's achieving his plan of reducing demand for electricity, particularly in the north.

In 2004, I visited Red Rock, one of the locations that was mentioned by the member for Kenora–Rainy River, and met with the mill manager. He made it very clear that energy costs were about a third of his costs of doing business and that he needed the government to address the cost of energy. Obviously they didn't, and now the Red Rock mill is shut.

It's painfully obvious that the strategy of this government is to blame everything on the federal government, as the Minister of Finance did in his speech and as the member from Scarborough Centre just did in his two-minute comment. Instead of taking some action themselves, just about every member of the government who gets up blames the federal government. Every day, they find new and creative ways of blaming the federal government instead of taking action. That's their strategy.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): It's my pleasure to make a few remarks on the speech of my leader, Howard Hampton from Kenora–Rainy River. I have to say, from my perspective, he has hit on all of the major issues facing families who live in the province of Ontario, everything from job losses to the national child benefit clawback, things that people have to deal with on a day-to-day basis that the McGuinty Liberal government they put here is turning its back on and ignoring. Whether it's a job loss in a paper mill in the north because of soaring hydro rates, whether it's a job loss from a plant closure or a staff or worker reduction in a manufacturing plant in southern Ontario, the bottom line is that this government's record has hurt the families of Ontario as opposed to helping the families of Ontario.

I'm very proud to be here, once again hearing my leader put on the record the serious issues this government continues to ignore in bringing forward a budget bill that, again, does not address the real problems facing the families and children of Ontario, particularly issues like affordable housing, as was mentioned, and underfunding of schools, where ESL and special education are being pickpocketed for the benefit of covering off the operating dollars that schools need just to make ends meet. It's a crying shame that this Liberal McGuinty government doesn't see its way to start investing in things that the families of Ontario would like to see investments in. People are falling behind. People are feeling like they're hanging on by their fingernails as hydro prices increase, as they're unable to maintain a quality of life in the province of Ontario. Yet what do these Liberal members do? They continue to harp, harp, harp about Harper instead of doing the right thing by the people of this province.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): It's a privilege to engage in this discussion about Bill 151. In case people are wondering what we're talking about here, we're talking about An Act to enact various 2006 Budget measures and to enact, amend or repeal various Acts. It's basically to try to correct some of the problems in past budgets and to try to stimulate more action and corrective legislation.

The member from Kenora–Rainy River offers us challenges, and I respect that. He does offer the opportunity

for us as legislators to try to make sure that as many people as possible don't get left behind. I haven't ever stood in my place and said that wasn't a laudable objective that we should all be doing, so I appreciate the fact that the member is offering us those challenges.

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The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka says there's a strategy here. Well, let's talk about the strategy. Here's how it works in this place. The opposition has relentlessly been standing up—less from the NDP, more so from the Conservatives, forgetting history—telling us we've done everything wrong and everything's bad. We're going to stand up and say that everything we're trying to do is for the benefit of the people of Ontario.

What I'm hearing now is that everyone is basically arguing over who did what when, where and why and how. What I'm going to suggest is something rather unique, that is, to take the challenges being put in front of us and attempt to make sure that the people of Ontario are receiving the best they can. So here's what we do: We get the best possible solutions when all three levels of government are working together and firing on the same pistons, so what I want to suggest to you very respectfully is that Bill 151 does talk about some of the things we can make corrections to that would get us there.

This place knows I've been pushing pretty hard on one thing, and that is to give municipalities more flexibility and additional provincial support in funding brownfields redevelopment. If we can get that off the ground, we can start getting those derelict properties back working again.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Kenora–Rainy River, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Hampton: I'm pleased to have this opportunity to respond. Let me say this, just some advice to the McGuinty government. We all know that the McGuinty government has received new federal money that has been earmarked for affordable housing. I suggest that if the McGuinty government wants to be able to enhance arguments about getting more federal money, then it should spend that \$400 million of new federal money that was earmarked for housing. It should be spent for housing now. The McGuinty government has received literally hundreds of millions of dollars of new federal money that was earmarked to reduce university and college tuition fees. Has the McGuinty government used that money for that purpose? No, it hasn't. In fact, it's put that money in its pocket and engaged in a process of driving university and college tuition fees up by 36% over the next four years. If the McGuinty government wants to have any credibility in complaining about the federal government, the McGuinty government should spend that money that was earmarked to reduce university and college tuition fees for that purpose, as other provinces like Nova Scotia have done. Then the McGuinty government might have some credibility in terms of arguing or complaining about the federal government.

I just want to bring out one other point with respect to this bill, and this is for people in northern Ontario. People in northern Ontario should look at this bill, because it contains a provision which will result in the same skyrocketing property tax increases in northern Ontario unorganized areas that you're already seeing in organized municipalities. It's going to result in a skyrocketing increase in property taxes for those people, and those people who live in an unorganized territory should be looking at this very carefully.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Racco: Let me continue what I said earlier today, and that is that Bill 151 deserves strong support because one of the objectives of this bill is to continue the change for Ontario that we have committed ourselves to as a party and that will create stronger communities and a prosperous economy.

Among the things this bill will do is to create an enhanced dividend tax credit to encourage investment in Ontario corporations. As I said earlier, the economy needs a little stimulus right now, and certainly that is one way of encouraging individuals to invest in Ontario corporations. If more people invest in those corporations, then more money will be available to those companies and individuals who wish to come up with new products that will make the operation more efficient and ensure that the economy in Ontario will do better; they will come up with new products that we will be able not only to use in Ontario but also to sell in the rest of Canada and to the rest of the world. That is how jobs are created. That's how economies are stimulated. Providing opportunities to the financial market to lend money to those individuals who come up with some bright ideas, with new products, will create jobs in the province of Ontario. That tax credit will assist us in achieving that objective.

In addition to that, it will enhance the interactive digital media tax credit. This incentive for a better tax credit will encourage individuals to invest in that area. As I said earlier, by investing in that area we will be able to create more jobs and we will be able to have a more vibrant economy.

In regard to giving more flexibility or more tools to a municipality, additional provincial support in funding brownfield developments and public infrastructure will be created. There will be two pilot projects that will be affected. Of course, one of them is the very famous project that some of us have been working on for so many years. Unfortunately, the Conservatives in Ottawa are blocking or preventing or delaying—whatever word you want to use—allocating the money to build the York–Spadina subway extension. You know very well that this honourable House has already allocated \$670 million for the construction of that subway extension all the way to the corporate centre of Vaughan, from Toronto to the region of York. The province has already put the money in the bank. The money is earning interest. Unfortunately, Ottawa is not coming in.

This bill will give more momentum, will give the tools to the municipalities. That would be the region of York

that is responsible, and Toronto and potentially the city of Vaughan. Of course, it's up to the local region or municipality to make that decision, but they may need to participate in that very, very important project, a project that has a value today of \$2.1 billion—not \$2.1 million but \$2.1 billion. Three ways, it's about \$670 million from each level of government. Again, the province has done so, but the feds have not.

I ask the opposition party members who know someone in government in Ottawa to encourage this step that the feds must do, because quite frankly, this is the time that we need to stimulate the economy. We are told that the economy will not perform as well this year as it did last year or the year before. This is the right time for us to do whatever we can to stimulate the economy. That major project of \$2.1 billion will certainly create hundreds, if not thousands, of jobs; and the spinoffs will certainly create thousands of jobs. Most importantly, it will give us a cleaner environment. It will minimize or decrease gridlock. It will allow people to work instead of wasting time in their cars or whatever way they are able to reach their destination. It is a win-win all the way. The only problem is that the feds don't seem to get the message. I hope that Bill 151, which is giving some of the tools to the municipalities, will assist at that level, but we still need the federal level to come in.

In addition to that, this bill will increase the income threshold of the Ontario property and sales tax credit for senior couples. Everybody speaks about assisting our seniors, that the taxes are too high and that we should do something about it. That's what this bill will do. It will take another step, something better than today. Certainly, the two opposition parties must support that. All of us should be supporting our seniors who are having major challenges paying their realty taxes. As you know, some of them bought their property, their home—their first home, possibly—40, 50, 60 years ago. They want to stay in their house until the last day of their lives. I understand that's only a small step, but whatever we can do in Bill 151 or any other bill coming up, for our seniors, all of us should support and encourage, because they are the ones who allowed us to be here today, who created us and have given us good wisdom to do what we are doing.

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In addition, Bill 151 excludes income received under the federal universal child care benefit from the eligibility calculation for the Ontario property and sales tax credits and for the Ontario child care supplements for working families. Again, that's another step to assist a family that is having more challenges than average Ontarians to pay the bills. The bill understands that and is going to assist to some degree those families that need some assistance.

It also announces the effectiveness of the Canadian Public Accountability Board—which reports public confidence in the financial reporting in Ontario capital markets—oversight of the auditing of public companies. All of us must know that investors all over the world look around to see where they can do better with their invest-

ments. Some companies have money that needs to be invested for 20, 30, 40 or more years—long-term investments. I'm talking mostly about pension money. People buy whatever investments so that at a certain age in their lives they will have some extra income from the private pension they have bought. Those companies all over the world, including Ontario, are looking where to invest, and of course, if they can rely on the economy, if they can rely on the system, they will be much more interested in making those investments.

There is nothing more healthy, in my opinion, than making sure that an investor—in particular those who don't live in the province or in the country—feels comfortable; that when they read a statement, it's a statement that is reflective of the financial situation of a company at a certain time in the lives of the corporation, and they can rely on it; that the investment will not be lost, but in fact there is enough confidence for them to really feel comfortable and make more investments in those companies.

Again, Bill 151 will do that. It will give those powers, that flexibility and those enforcements to the accounting profession and therefore will certainly send a strong message to international investors and also to Ontario investors and Canadian investors that those companies' financial statements are a reflection of the truthful value of what is reported in them. We don't have to go into specifics, because not too long ago we all read about the unreliability of some of those statements. Again, Bill 151 insists on that area, and I think all of us should embrace and support it very strongly.

To conclude, let me say how damaging it is for people to use tobacco, to smoke cigarettes and so on. We all speak quite often about the costs and the unhealthiness of such a product that is in our province, in our country and in the world. This bill will have some enforcement provisions to penalize those companies that, unfortunately, do not operate properly.

Those are a few reasons why Bill 151 must be supported, and I encourage all of the honourable members to do the right thing and support it.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms. MacLeod: Surprise, surprise: We're attacking the federal government yet again when we're talking about financial pressures in this province, not to mention the fact that I just spent 20 minutes talking about the fact that this crowd opposite me has taxed and spent its way into virtual oblivion. We reference it by the close to \$4.4 billion that the former auditor in this province, Erik Peters, basically said was a one-time funding problem, largely due in part to the former federal Liberals who were slow in getting us money with respect to SARS, the blackout and almost everything else. So that is awfully troubling. They talk about history, but they often forget their own federal Liberal past, which is quite unfortunate, because of course this was the crowd that spawned sponsorship scandals and the Gomery report, because they literally stole billions of dollars from Canadian taxpayers. Now they're trying to shift the blame onto their federal counterparts who were elected by the people for the people to represent us in the House of Commons.

If they're going to continue to go on through the next year in such an antagonistic way, how are we ever going to get anything done? We have to be working together. They sit here and every day they ask us to phone our federal counterparts. Well, excuse me, that's their job. They were elected by the people of Ontario to put forward budgets that reflect the issues and the interests of the people of Ontario. They don't do that. They've been asked by the people of Ontario to work with the federal government that was duly elected by the people of this province and this country on January 23, 2006, and they refuse to do it. In fact, they say one thing to Ontario's face and they do another behind its back. The thing is, how can Stephen Harper and the New Democrats, how can Jack Layton, want to work with these people when all they do is say one thing, do another, break a promise here, break a promise there? That's all they do.

Ms. Horwath: It's my pleasure to make a few comments on the remarks made by the member from—I can't remember the member's riding.

Mr. Racco: Thornhill.

Ms. Horwath: The member from Thornhill; I apologize.

I think it's interesting to watch the government members in their debate of this particular bill this afternoon, because really they're spending most of their time not talking about what they are trying to accomplish with their legislation. Rather, they're harping about what they can't get accomplished with the federal, Harper government. It's passing strange to hear the government spending all of its time—instead of talking about how proud they are of the pieces of legislation, of the clauses in Bill 151 that we're supposed to be debating today, instead of talking about how proud they are of their accomplishments and achievements, they're talking about how problematic their relationship is with the federal government. Well, really, in this Legislature, as we debate bills, we're supposed to be talking about this government's achievements and its ability to deliver for the people of Ontario. I'll be able to speak to this myself specifically in a very short period of time as I have an opportunity to debate this bill as well.

I believe the people of Ontario want to hear what the government plans to do about the fact that there's still a problem with the funding formula in the school boards across Ontario, who are robbing one program or two programs or three programs, the ones that are needed for the children who have English-as-a-second-language challenges, for the children who have special education needs. Those programs are being robbed so that the school boards can pay just to make ends meet.

We see a lack of affordable housing in this province. That means that families continue to struggle and scratch to put food on their table. We see hydro rates increasing to the extent that people are not able to make ends meet and then are losing jobs on top of it because companies can't afford to pay their hydro bills. Those are the issues that the province of Ontario needs to work on.

Ms. Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): You know, I almost think that the member from Hamilton East—

Ms. Horwath: You're supposed to be talking about Thornhill.

Ms. Matthews: I know, but you gave me a good introduction. You gave me a very good introduction, because you asked us to talk about things we're really proud of. There are many things that I'm very proud of in this. One of them, the interactive digital media tax credit, will create jobs in my riding. People are working because we're paying attention to this growing sector.

Another thing that I'm really very proud of is what we're doing for seniors. We think that seniors who receive the guaranteed minimum level of income should get the full benefit of the Ontario property and sales tax credits. This legislation will increase the threshold to make sure those low-income seniors will get full advantage of the tax credits that they are entitled to.

The other thing I want to quickly talk about is the universal child care benefit. I hesitate when I call it a child care benefit because we all know that this has nothing to do with child care. But this legislation would ensure that that money is not clawed back from our most vulnerable children. This is on top of other changes we've made to improve the quality of life for children in low-income families. There's much more to do, but we have done a lot. And because we have not increased the clawback—we've allowed people to keep the increase of the NCBS since we were elected—that means that a single mom with two kids has had an average increase of 15.7% in income since we were elected. This now would add an additional \$2,400 of income to those very poor children, and I applaud that component of this.

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Mr. Yakabuski: I found it interesting listening to the member for Brant, who spoke about, you know, "How you're going to make this thing work in this Confederation is the three levels of government are going to work together, talk and settle these things and work in a productive fashion." And then the member for Thornhill, who has the floor, goes right back to the same old story about, "It's the federal government." That's the whole crux of this, the failure of this government; everything hinges on the federal government.

Not so many months ago, the Premier talked about how he thought he could work with Messrs. Baird, Flaherty and Clement in Ottawa, but now he senses that there is some political gain for him to be bashing them. So what does he do? He starts bashing them with personal ad hominem attacks, those members of the federal government, because this government has absolutely totally failed to live up to its responsibility. And when it feels the heat, it lashes out at the federal government for two reasons: one, it covers up the fact of their own failures, but two, they're hoping that the media actually takes a different tack and starts talking about that issue in the media again and fails to talk about how this government has failed, failed from a financial perspective.

When they took office, the budget in this province was sitting at \$68 billion; now it's at \$88 billion. That's a \$20-billion increase in spending in this province in under four years. How long can you sustain that?

It's because they can't say no when they should say no, and they don't know where to invest the money that will really pay dividends for the people of the province of Ontario. They can't say no in Caledonia. That bill will soon be up to \$100 million. What have they done there? They've just dropped the ball to the federal government and said, "We can't deal with it anymore. I guess we were in over our heads, and now we want the federal government to come in and bail us out." I say again, shame on this government for no leadership.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Thornhill, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Racco: Let me say thank you to the member from Nepean–Carleton. Let me also remind her that I specifically spoke about items on the bill. And if the subway is one of the items on the bill, certainly it's important that we raise it. She may wish to speak with her counterparts in Ottawa.

To the member from Hamilton East: I spoke about the major point of the bill, and I'm sure if you will look at the Hansard, you will note that that is what we spoke about on the bill. And, of course, the member from London North Centre spoke about some of the items that I raised and clarified for the member.

The member from Pembroke did not address Bill 151 at all. I think that you had a golden opportunity to stress the issue that you felt instead of complaining about the issue that we raised. That was a golden opportunity for us to hear where you agreed or disagreed with the bill. Unfortunately, you did not touch that part.

Let me tell you this, though. Bill 151 in fact provides tools to municipalities such as Toronto and the region of York to be able to deal with a major infrastructure project, which is the extension of the subway to the region of York, the first time from Toronto going out of Toronto into another region, the region of York. Unfortunately, that project is not going anywhere today because of your colleagues in Ottawa who are not contributing. Bill 151, as I said, is addressing the issue, is giving the tools, and of course, we are waiting to see what the other level of government, whoever is going to be there at the time, will be able to do.

Having said that, I want to say thank you again to the four members who spoke on this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): I welcome the opportunity to address Bill 151 this afternoon. As we know, this is the Budget Measures Act. In looking at this piece of proposed legislation, I would like to try to determine how it would relate to my riding down in Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant and what it might do, being a bill about our economy, to help out with respect to our farm economy and our rural economy in Ontario.

There's an expression in rural Ontario: "You can't spend your money until you earn it." That is a very

simple way of looking at things. It's something that I personally attempt to subscribe to. I feel in many ways that should be government policy. I do believe in balanced budgets, although we do know that in times of warfare or dire economic circumstances, one does have to run a deficit on occasion. I really question why any level of government would even think of running a deficit and compound an existing debt during the good times, but we have seen that pattern, actually, with several governments in the province of Ontario.

Bill 151 is an economy bill. As you would know, much of rural Ontario and farm Ontario is in a bit of trouble with respect to their economy. I find—and I suggest this to the members present today—that we have an opportunity right now, between now and November 13, to continue to stay plugged in, if you will, in our home areas by either attending the many all-candidates nights that are happening across the province or, at minimum, monitoring what's coming up through our local media.

I've attended a number of nights in the past, and I have an opportunity with our small-town local media to stay informed. Many questions are being raised. Many of them do relate to issues economic, certainly in my area down in Haldimand, Norfolk, and Brant counties, and there are plenty of ideas coming forward with respect to economic development and ways of dealing with many of these issues as a result of the economic downturn in certain areas in my riding. Good ideas come forward. I attended an all-candidates night in Dunnville just last week—excellent presentations from all concerned at the level of mayor, the municipal level and at the school board level.

In much of my area, agriculture really is the heart of the economy, and I can't say this enough: We're going through some tough times. We have some opportunities down my way. One opportunity, which has apparently been put on the shelf somewhat, is what I refer to as the mid-Pen corridor, that transportation corridor to move people, goods and services out of the Buffalo-New York area towards Toronto, by and large. This mid-Pen corridor was raised many times at the all-candidates nights to date in the Haldimand area.

Other issues raised: Obviously, we need to cut red tape. Those of us in this House are fully aware of the myriad of rules, regulations and red tape that suffocate so many good intentions. Red tape essentially takes the fun out of doing business. Again, at these nights, we hear the need for water and sewer infrastructure, road and highway development.

One unique comment that comes up time and time again through these all-candidates nights, and certainly through the feedback I receive at my constituency office, is the need to return to the realm of law and order. The standoff in Caledonia, the illegal occupation just south of town, has created a tremendous amount of uncertainty with respect to our local economy. It's not an issue that can be addressed through Bill 151, but everything is interrelated. As we all know, uncertainty is very bad for

business. The other thing that's very bad for business and job creation is any government that jacks up taxes.

1700

Another threat in Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant: Brantford is a major supplier, for example, for the Nanticoke generating station. Six hundred jobs are on the line at that plant, 600 jobs that this particular government has indicated they're more than willing to sacrifice. They're more than willing to subtract not only 600 jobs, they're more than willing to subtract \$3 million from the treasury of Haldimand county.

I find that many people aspiring for municipal office, they get it, they understand it. They understand the need as an elected representative to make it very clear that the province of Ontario and counties like Haldimand, Brant and Norfolk are open for business. They make it very clear that in order to realize the opportunities that are there in agriculture, the opportunities in small business and industry and in the housing industry, we need to show a serious commitment to infrastructure, to better roads and to transportation links.

I go back to the mid-Pen corridor. It's crucial for a community like Dunnville to have that link, to have that access to the mid-Pen, as what appears to be the economic trend continues east, as the people in Dunnville continue to look toward the Niagara region with respect to not only economic activity but social interaction as well. The bottom line: Jobs are so important in a rural area. Without jobs, people leave, young people in particular, to pick up work elsewhere.

Farther west in my area, communities like Delhi and Langton, the heart of tobacco country—it wasn't that long ago that virtually every single farm in the Langton area was growing tobacco. I think something like 97% of the agricultural activity in the Langton area, down in the southwest, was related to growing leaf. Right now, constituents are reeling from the news very recently announced by the tobacco board that 150 pink slips are in order for the coming crop year, if there is one. Again, this kind of uncertainty is very bad for business. We're not seeing much in the way of answers in this particular bill, Bill 151. I know it makes reference to tobacco taxes; it seems that just about every budget that comes out from this government takes a hit to tobacco taxes. But I see no plan. I don't see a plan in this legislation or in the various sections that provides much encouragement for the rural areas that I represent in my particular area, the rural south of the province of Ontario.

Delhi, a case in point, is an example of economic devastation. The threat to downtown Delhi can be exemplified by, and in fact I would suggest has been accelerated by, Ontario government policy. We lost the MTO office and we lost the licence bureau. This government put out a request for proposals. People with business sense in the community applied, put their money on the table and discovered that that RFP had been withdrawn. Again, we only hope that adjacent businesses and businesses thinking of coming to Delhi would not follow the McGuinty lead of essentially abandoning

small communities, taking out an MTO office. We need something much better than that. We need solutions, essentially, and I see little of that in this particular piece of legislation, the Budget Measures Act.

It's not only Delhi and what's reflected with the hit on the downtown in the community of Delhi. There is concern in parts of Simcoe, in the town of Simcoe. I recall downtown Dunnville in the 1980s. I used to consult in that community with business and industry, and there was devastation in that particular town in the 1980s. It's time to plan for that now and do everything we can, not only to attempt to spruce up downtown but to work on the underlying economic underpinnings, the foundation of communities like Delhi, Simcoe, Dunnville and the neighbouring area that provides the customers, provides the visitors to the town and provides the economic foundation to ensure that we have a healthy downtown. In this Budget Measures Act, I fail to see any indication or any real hope, essentially, that would help out.

Our rural economy needs stimuli. We see this with tobacco. Obviously, in the last several years, we have seen a war on tobacco—this government is upfront about referring to it that way—and any war on tobacco or on farmers is not the answer. There are some approaches. For a number of years I've called for a feasibility study to take a look at a pipeline, for example, to draw raw water north from Lake Erie, raw water that would be available for our irrigation-based agriculture on what's referred to as the Norfolk sand plain, the sand area that touches east Elgin, southern Oxford county, Brant county primarily in the west and much of Norfolk county. Untreated water could be available for irrigation. Once it hits Highway 3, water would be available for treatment to serve those towns, ranging from Tillsonburg, Delhi, Simcoe and Waterford. As far as who pays the bill, I really feel there is a tremendous potential for partnerships with the city of Guelph, for example. Kitchener-Waterloo—a certain percentage of their water draws on the Grand River, Brantford draws on the Grand River, and so many smaller towns. Burford, Oakland and St. George in my riding rely on wells in that sand plain. Perhaps the time has come and we need to check out the feasibility of a water pipeline.

I look at Bill 151 in the context of being a member of the PC caucus in this Ontario Legislature, a caucus that opposes tax increases and higher taxes, a caucus that is very concerned about high electricity rates—essentially what we consider the runaway spending nature of a series of budgets now coming from the McGuinty government. This government has taken \$6 billion more in revenue than was felt to be needed to keep that litany of promises that was presented to the people of Ontario during that last election three years ago. Those promises remain broken. We have seen no reduction in taxes—no reduction in taxes for Ontario's overtaxed low-income seniors, for example, and no reduction for overtaxed families or businesses. I don't see any tax cuts announced in this particular piece of legislation named the Budget Measures Act.

Over the years, we've seen what I call a rise and then a fall of the traditional Liberal tax-and-spend, tax-some-more-and-spend-some-more recipe of disaster for this economy. Under the current regime, the tax-and-spend orthodoxy is seeing a renaissance, and I am concerned that we are well on our way to the bad old days. In June 1997, I did a presentation in this House on tax-and-spend Liberal economics and made reference to the previous government as well. The NDP government, coupled with the Liberal governments at that time, during their era passed on to people in Ontario a total of 65 tax increases. They gave consumers 65 reasons not to spend money, they gave businesses 65 reasons not to hire new employees and they gave investors 65 reasons to keep their money out of the economy. Those were tough times. Wages increased 54%. However, taxes increased something in the order of 73%. Nobody got to see a single penny of those raise increases because government was giving itself yet again an ever-increasing and bigger raise.

1710

I used the treadmill analogy at that time, and I'm seeing this coming now. People were running on a treadmill, but every time they ran a little faster and worked a little harder, invested more in the economy or did their best to better their skill set, Liberal and NDP governments just increased the speed of the treadmill. In the end, people were working harder but they were not seeing the fruits of their labour. This philosophy of punishing hard work can be downright dangerous, in particular for the economy. With this budget bill, Bill 151, I see no evidence or indication of attempting to turn back the clock on this one.

In 2003, Premier McGuinty—Dalton McGuinty, at the time—looked into the eyes of Ontarians and said, and I quote the oft-quoted expression, “I will not raise your taxes.” Do you remember that? I remember reading that election platform. It also said, “We'll balance the budget.” In 2003, the present government said they would balance the budget and they would keep taxes down. In 2003, Liberals pretended they had learned that Liberal tax-and-spend economics don't work. They promised that they had learned those lessons, but they're Liberals: A promise is a promise that must be broken.

Let's be clear: In my view—and I'm really synthesizing my degree in economics, if you will, and my experience in this House over the last 11 years—tax cuts do create jobs. What do tax hikes do? They kill jobs. Deficit spending just mortgages the future of our children. This current regime is obviously on the wrong side of this economic equation.

I was reading the Toronto Star this weekend. I don't do that often, but it was sad to see a story titled, “Liberals Expect to Face Election with Deficit.” In it, Greg Sorbara promised to deliver yet another large budget deficit this coming spring. It's a sad day when the provincial Minister of Finance is promising a flood of red ink. Why would he do that just before an election? I do try and search for the silver lining. Maybe the Liberals will see

their deficit promise like some of their other promises: Maybe they'll break it.

The Toronto Sun—now there's a paper that I do have occasion to read a little more regularly. In fact, in many parts of my riding, it's pretty difficult to find the Toronto Star, but you can find the Toronto Sun. Again, I'd like to read more about the McGuinty Liberal economic train wreck, in my view:

“McGuinty takes the blame in our downfall, too—with lame-brain policies like higher taxes, skyrocketing electricity prices and the highest property tax burden in the industrialized world, which has sent firms packing and caused plants to close. At last count, Ontario had lost more than 100,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs, and the list continues to grow.”

That's the Toronto Sun. Regrettably in what we heard this afternoon during question period, that list is continuing to grow. Nobody is feeling the pinch of this government's failed borrow, tax and spend policy more than the good people throughout rural Ontario. It's been less than a month since the McGuinty Liberals down-loaded the massive cost of source water protection onto rural Ontario. Rural Ontario has a long memory. Rural Ontario remembers—

Ms. MacLeod: They will never forget this crowd.

Mr. Barrett: They remember well. They won't forget. They remember when Dalton McGuinty made the promise—get this one. Here's another promise: “We will make the Ministry of Agriculture a lead ministry.”

We're debating a budget bill. Take a look at the last budget. Cash crop farmers ended up with a 51% decrease in assistance. This government continues to pay lip service to farmers by telling them that agriculture is a top priority, but you know, as we've seen in the House this afternoon, it has degenerated to running and hiding. And when they do get caught, they kind of turn around, they're in a corner, and they point towards Ottawa—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Questions and comments?

Ms. Horwath: I certainly want to commend the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant for his remarks on Bill 151. He brought some interesting perspectives to the table that I think are necessary, particularly around the challenges that rural communities are facing in terms of their economy and the ability of their economy to grow and to be prosperous in these particular times. I think the concerns that he raises are ones around whether or not the government has forgotten their responsibilities, their obligations to make sure that all parts of the province are thriving and doing well, that families everywhere in Ontario have an opportunity to share when things are going well economically.

Granted, we're all fearful that the economy is going in the wrong direction, but jeez, if the economy was going in the right direction for some time and these communities are still suffering, then obviously governments need to understand that there are some things that need to be done to buoy those communities so that when we do get into more difficult economic times, those communities

aren't completely devastated. I say that from the perspective, of course, of not a rural community, but actually that's maybe not true, because I do have my friend from another riding close to mine from the Hamilton area. Hamilton has the kind of luxury that many communities don't have: We're made up of both an urban centre and what are considered to be more traditional rural, agricultural types of areas. So my friend here from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough—

Interjection: Aldershot.

Ms. Horwath: Aldershot; I want to say Westdale every time. That's next time around.

He's someone who represents more of the rural types of areas, as well as even urban centres in his riding. It's quite a diverse area.

Again, the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant brings some important issues to the table. It's unfortunate that in the context of debating a budget bill, the frustrations he's experiencing on behalf of the people that he represents is at such a high level. The government needs to look at these issues and start responding to some of the rural communities and their concerns.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I certainly am very pleased to be able to take a moment to comment on the issues that the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant has brought forward. He talked about things such as that farmers don't spend what they haven't earned, and yet I can say, as a farmer, very often that's exactly what we do. We start our spring with a line of credit from our local bank. We have to put our crop into the ground somehow. It's a cycle that we repeat every year, and we work from that. It certainly makes a lot of people who look at our accounting systems and our books a little bit nervous when they see the kinds of dollars that we invest into our communities and the kinds of dollars that we invest in our businesses as farmers, but we nevertheless do take those kinds of risks. It's part of being a farmer.

He talked about the war on tobacco, and I say that's true. As a government, we are waging war on tobacco. We know the impact that it has on the health system. But a war on tobacco is not a war on tobacco farmers; it's far from that. We recognize that the tobacco industry and the tobacco producers in this province certainly need some assistance. We have provided that kind of assistance in the past, and we're looking for our federal counterparts to help with that, because I think it's very important.

What this budget bill does do is talk about trying to deal with the issue of tobacco taxes. We recognize that what we have in this situation now is tobacco taxes that are being reduced because we are asking people to use less tobacco. What we want to do in this bill is at least maximize that which we can still capture in terms of revenues; that would be taxes from tobacco that people use in a legitimate way. And we want to penalize the illegitimate use of tobacco.

1720

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'd like to say to the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant that I

listened very carefully to his comments. First of all, I want to thank him on behalf of our caucus for what I would consider to be really the true leadership we've seen in the Caledonia situation, someone who's worked for I think now it's 245 days, 247 days—in that area. I know that the member has kept a close eye and tried to work with the whole community with this crisis that's going on. I think in that time period he's probably noticed the negative impact that this Caledonia crisis has had on his community and, at least with our caucus and day after day in this House, has tried to support his constituents the best way he can, and that is to bring those issues to the forefront here.

He's also seen tens of millions of dollars wasted now. We have no idea how much money Caledonia has cost the taxpayers of the province of Ontario. I understand today that they sent the Minister of Natural Resources, who has the responsibility for aboriginal affairs, to Ottawa. He's going to tell them how to do it up there. I bet you he comes back with a big cheque tomorrow, which will be just a joke because you know he'll come back with nothing. It will be just one more day when we'll question that government over there on how much money Caledonia has cost. We don't know. The Premier refuses to answer. If you can believe it, the Minister of Community Safety has no idea—he will not inform this House if he does—how much the OPP policing has cost the citizens of the province of Ontario. I find that disgusting. I can go to any police service board. I can go to any—

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): I find you guys disgusting. Rednecks.

Mr. Dunlop: Isn't this pathetic? He's over there babbling away. Make him apologize.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments? The member for Brant.

Mr. Levac: Bill 151, the Budget Measures Act, is a bill that introduces continuation of the budget that we were talking about earlier—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, order now. Minister, order. Members, come to order, please. Member for Brant.

Mr. Levac: As I continue to talk about it, I'd like to bring to the attention of the House, for those who may not have heard all of the things that are in the budget, an interactive digital media tax credit. Now, that might sound like a perplexing issue, but we had the owners of a new digital animation studio come before us and say this is probably one of the most progressive pieces of legislation they've seen in their business in a long time. What that basically does is that it's a tax credit rate from 20% to 30% and that represents jobs created in this industry.

They enhanced the property tax and sales tax credits for seniors, another one that has been missed by the debate tonight, the proposed increased income threshold for property and sales tax credits for seniors with their spouse or common-law partner from \$22,000 to \$23,000

starting in 2006 and an increase with social security so that those people can apply that to the ownership of their home.

Universal child care benefit: Ontarians who qualify for the federal UCCB would keep the benefits they're entitled to receive under the Ontario property and sales tax credits for the Ontario child care supplement for working families.

Some of these point got missed and I wanted to make sure that we mentioned them. I will repeat, for the sake of sounding a little bit boring, that we're going to give the municipalities flexibility and additional provincial support in funding for brownfield redevelopment. I'm telling you this one is going to be a sleeper. This one is a sleeper. This one is going to put those properties back to work to collect taxes.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Are we ready? The member for Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Barrett: Thanks to the member from Hamilton East. As Haldimand goes through tough times, they rely on the city of Hamilton. I'd say that for a hundred years Haldimand farm boys have worked in the steel mills in Hamilton. Their reputation is well-known. In fact, over the years they did such a good job that they finally moved the steel mills down to Haldimand county, as the Lake Erie Works down at Nanticoke.

The member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex pointed out, rightfully so, that farmers do spend. I was watching my partner last night trying to get beans off and I think of the investment in not only beans but corn, just the operating cost, the money you have to put out for spray, nitrogen and diesel. It was tough going last night. I hate to think what the land is going to look like next spring with the compression, given the amount of rain that we've had down our way. But I guess all we ask is that the government help out in times of need. There are fixed costs. I look at that combine that he purchased. That's not something you can be accommodated through the CAIS program, and it becomes almost a liability in a sense.

The member for Simcoe North knows the policing issue well. He knows Caledonia well. He has talked to a large number of our officers. I'm pro-OPP, and it's up to everyone in this House to do everything we can, including the member for Brant, to restore the good reputation of our OPP.

I was in Caledonia last night. It's not hard to find a meeting in Caledonia. You just roll into Tim Hortons. There's always a group there that are at the ready and on the watch—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Further debate?

Ms. Horwath: I've got to tell you, I think the government has a little plan that every time I've got to get up and make a 20-minute speech they send my friend Ted McMeekin from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot over to chat me up for a while so that I get off my game. But nonetheless, it was a very pleasant conversation. Actually, I quite enjoy my conversations with my

old friend from the old regional council of Hamilton–Wentworth at the time, which is now the city of Hamilton.

I'm pleased to have an opportunity, all kidding aside, to speak to Bill 151, An Act to enact various 2006 Budget measures and to enact, amend or repeal various Acts. It's quite a large bill—192 pages long. It has a number of measures in it. It's an omnibus bill, a house-keeping bill, whatever. It basically enacts a number of various things that the government has been talking about and needed to get done. I know that my critic, Michael Prue, spoke about this issue last night, and I have his remarks with me, so I'm going to touch on a few of the things that he raised. But the most important that I wanted to start with is the issue of the assessment freeze which was announced by the government in response to the pressures that came about when André Marin, our Ombudsman, released that quite critical report on the assessment system in the province of Ontario. I know that the government responded to some 17 or so, I think, of the recommendations of the Ombudsman's report, but there are still several recommendations that are outstanding.

One of the important ones, and certainly one of the important ones from the perspective of people in my riding who have had challenges with their assessments, is the entire issue of who has the onus of responsibility for proving that the information that MPAC is using to assess properties is in fact the correct information. Of course, as anyone knows who has tried to appeal their assessment, their assessed value, the burden of proof is placed on the property owner, so that the person who is appealing somehow has to be able to find the evidence that would justify the fact that the opinion that they have, which is that their property is in fact over-assessed, is real. The problem with that is that, of course, the assessor is the one who has the file, who has the information and who uses the information to come up with a number. The homeowner has no idea what is in that file and what the assessor is basing that estimate of the value on. So by having the onus on the homeowner or the property owner, it creates quite a difficult situation, sometimes quite an impossible situation, because it's like a stab in the dark trying to figure out what the assessment office is basing their opinion on.

So one of the things that the Ombudsman recommended was that the onus is reversed, so that the property assessment corporation is in fact the one that has to prove that their assessment is based on appropriate information, that the value that they put on a property has merit because of these following reasons which are on file for that particular property. But that hasn't been followed up on, and neither have a couple of other issues.

1730

What I found interesting is that one of the things the government did around that same time was to determine—and I think it was also the added pressure of a bill that I believe a member from the Conservative caucus brought forward, the Homestead Act or something of that

nature. It was his response to this property assessment problem that we have in the province of Ontario, a problem, interestingly, started by that party and their wrong-headed approach to downloading particularly, as well as the assessment system they put in place. We've been struggling with this flawed assessment system, and with the pressure from the Ombudsman as well as the pressure from that private member's bill, the government's response, instead of actually dealing with the real problems that exist out there—their knee-jerk reaction was to get them over the next election hump, which is October of next year. They decided, "Oh, what a great idea. Let's just freeze the assessed property values in the province so that maybe the people of Ontario are going to forget that there's a big, huge mess when it comes to assessment. Maybe if they don't have to deal with values going through the roof this year and next year, when it comes to election time this won't be an election issue for us."

But the people of my community, I can tell you, are not so easily duped. There are significant systemic problems in the city of Hamilton. Of course, the McGuinty government is not unaware of this. They're not unaware of it because every single year the city of Hamilton comes to this place, with cap in hand, asking the government to fix the problem the city has in its inability to meet the needs of the residents of Hamilton because of the lack of funding or the lack of acknowledgement that the downloaded services the city of Hamilton ended up with, as a result of the formula the previous government put in place, far outcosts their ability to pay for them. We have a situation where, whether it's \$19 million or \$21 million—unfortunately, the number is increasing as opposed to decreasing, so the problem is getting worse. But the bottom line is that the city of Hamilton has an ongoing systemic problem, as do many, many other municipalities in the province. The government is not unaware of AMO's criticisms of the previous downloading situation that the last government stuck cities with across this province. It's a huge problem, and it's a problem this government knew very well about when they were elected, had some criticisms of when it was being put in place, yet three years into their mandate, instead of coming clean and saying, "You know what? This is definitely a problem and we're going to work hard to fix it," they just put it all on freeze so the people of Ontario can maybe forget it's a problem and they don't have to address it going into the next election.

It's really disappointing. The minister who brought the freeze forward says, "We need time to study it." Well, the reality is that the studies are out there, and they're out there in spades. There is a great deal of information that was put together by AMO. Individual municipalities have put together in-depth analyses of what's happening with their budgets, where the pressures are, where the downloading revenue-neutral theory that the previous government had does not wash, does not add up, is not appropriate in terms of the perspective from the municipal side. Unfortunately, the government has chosen to

sweep that problem under the carpet—or try to. It's a big, huge lump under the carpet, though. I'm sure the people of Ontario would like to see some kind of information from the government as to how they're going to deal with the combined pressures of the market value assessment or current value assessment system with the downloading.

I've gotta give it to the previous guys; they knew how to obfuscate the reality of the dual pressures of the changed assessment system along with the downloading. Many, many municipalities spent a great deal of time just trying to figure out what it was: Was it amalgamation, was it CVA, was it downloading? What was it that caused all the problems with the budgetary pressures at the municipal level? Of course, the answer is that it was all of those. But the answer today is that it's this government's responsibility to figure out what needs to be done to make it better in terms of the financial pressures on municipalities.

My party did spend some time consulting with and talking to the people of Ontario. I attended many different town hall meetings in many different jurisdictions across the province. We came up with a plan ourselves. If we can come up with a plan ourselves, imagine what kind of plan—if the government only put its mind to it, with all the staff and all the resources and all the researchers and all the financial people it has at its beck and call. If they had only put a little bit of time to it, I'm sure they could have come up with some kind of recommendations as well. But they chose not to. Instead, they chose to simply sweep the problem under the carpet, keep their heads down and hope it doesn't come up in the next election. That's certainly not the kind of responsive leadership that people hope for from their governments. It's exactly the opposite.

In the context of Bill 151 particularly, the government is talking proudly about taxation on seniors and making sure that seniors are not doubly taxed, and there is a bit of a reference to that in this bill. But seniors at this point in time have been so burdened by the property tax inequities that they've had to live with and deal with over the last couple of years. If the government really wanted to see seniors get what they deserve in terms of acknowledgement and recognition of the efforts they've made in this province over time, we would be dealing with the problems that exist with the property tax system. A lot of those seniors have been pretty much run out of their homes because the system has not been fixed over the first three years of this government's term. The pressure has been enormous, and people on fixed incomes have simply not been able to keep up with the property tax increases. The reason it has become even more difficult for seniors to keep up with those increases is that the property tax increases have been exacerbated by other cost-of-living increases that have put pressure on seniors on fixed incomes.

I speak specifically about the increase in hydro rates—well over 50% so far—that this government has allowed to occur since it took office a mere three years ago. That is unacceptable. People simply cannot afford to have

hydro increases at that rate. It's not like we're talking about luxury goods or some kind of purchase or payment that could easily be weeded out of a budget, where somebody could put some austerity measures on their lifestyle and say, "Well, I'm no longer going to go to the bingo or whatever once a week. I'm going to cut back because I can't afford it any more." With hydro, people don't have that choice. Hydro is a basic need, particularly in a province like Ontario. But certainly anywhere in a civilized nation, a civilized province; we would understand that hydro is a basic need. People are required to pay their bills to have a fridge that runs, to have a stove and, in some cases, unfortunately, to have heating, to be able to run their lights and their appliances and everything else. So it's not like these people, particularly fixed-income people, and in this context of my discussion today, fixed-income seniors, have the option to opt out of purchasing or consuming hydro.

So what does this government do? This government adds insult to injury by telling seniors—seniors who are already scrimping and saving every penny, seniors who are already overburdened by tax increases that in some cases are chasing them out of their homes, seniors who are already having a difficult time making ends meet, many of whom are on subsistence-level pensions—that the answer to their problems is a smart meter. "The answer to your problem is that you consume too much hydro."

1740

Well, I've got to tell you that the seniors in Hamilton East were offended—offended—by the thought, the suggestion. These are people who have lived through the Depression in some cases. These are people who know what austere times are. These are people who understand quite clearly how to try to make ends meet, because, unfortunately, many of them have experienced extreme hard times. So for them to be told by their government, while the government is increasing the rates by over 50% in a matter of a couple of years, that the answer for seniors is that they need to do laundry at 3 o'clock in the morning or that they should take their showers at 9 o'clock at night is just not acceptable. Not only is it not acceptable, but it's insulting. It's insulting because what you're telling those people is that they don't have the common sense to figure out how to reduce their consumption and that the reduction of consumption is what's going to show up on their hydro bill.

It's passing strange. When the government was lauding the recent hydro rates, saying there was no rate increase and that there was a reduction, people looked at their own hydro bills and realized that in fact that didn't happen, that in fact some \$3 a month are the only savings that people got to see. It was a slap in the face to those senior citizens. It was truly a slap in the face.

I say to the government, as you're talking the good talk and trying to convince seniors that you're actually doing something for them, I think you actually need to look in their eyes and talk to them about the real effects, listen to them and hear what they have to say about the

real effects of the McGuinty Liberal lack of action on property taxes and action in the wrong direction on hydro prices, because those things, put together, are not going to make up for this small, little clause in Bill 151 that speaks to the harmonization of tax rates for seniors.

I have to tell you that it's a difficult reality to deal with, but certainly I hear it in my community. I think that members of this Legislature, particularly government members, need to go home and talk to some of their senior citizens. Go to the Legions. You'll be seeing many of those seniors in a very short time as we congratulate the survivors of our wars—the First World War, the Second World War, the Korean War—as we talk about how much we respect the sacrifices those soldiers and their families made over the years and decades to try to build this wonderful country and build this wonderful province. We'll be talking to them, and you should be talking to them as well about whether or not they are actually seeing any positive benefit from the McGuinty Liberals' reign in office. I can tell you that certainly the ones in my community have serious, serious concerns that they have been all but ignored by the government.

Speaking of seniors, one of the other issues that came up in my riding recently was long-term-care centres, long-term-care homes and the extent to which long-term-care homes are providing quality care, or not, for the seniors of our communities. It was painful and horrific to tour some of those long-term-care homes in the dog days of summer, in August, and see the condition that our senior citizens were expecting to subsist in. It was a disgrace to see that those long-term-care facilities are not required to maintain a minimum cooling standard in the hottest days of the year. Unfortunately, when the Minister of Health brought his new long-term care, or lack of standards for seniors, into the Legislature recently, he didn't bother to include minimum cooling standards for our senior citizens who are living in long-term-care centres.

You know what? The saddest thing of all is that people will know that senior citizens have many issues around circulation. So, for them, they don't need to have a 62-degree temperature, a 68-degree temperature to keep them cool. In fact, they don't want that cool a temperature because with their blood circulation, oftentimes they don't experience the heat at quite the same level as we do, which isn't to say that they don't deserve to have a level of comfort, a level of heating that is comfortable for them. It wouldn't cost a fortune to do that; it wouldn't require significant expenditures, I don't think. But even if it did, goddam it, those people are worth it. They've contributed so much to our communities over the years. We talk the platitudes, but when it comes to actually putting our money where our mouth is, in terms of really representing the dignity and quality of life of our seniors, we don't see it—I don't see it—coming through. I don't see it shining through in the legislation this government brings forward here at Queen's Park, and it's unfortunate. In fact, it's worse than unfortunate; it's completely inappropriate, and it saddens me greatly.

Nonetheless, I've spent my entire speech talking about senior citizens, and I did that because I believe that if we can find ways to make sure we are doing the right thing by them, then we also know that, as a result, the quality of life we expect for others in our community will also be improved. For example, as we look at hydro rates and how they negatively affect senior citizens, so too do they affect other families.

Coming from a community that has a growing rate of poverty—in fact, a rate of poverty that has now matched Toronto's—I know that issues like increased hydro rates, lack of affordable housing, lack of affordable daycare and the national child benefit clawback are all things this government needs to address.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Hon. Ms. Di Cocco: It's a pleasure to respond to the member for Hamilton East. One of the aspects of this discussion that I'd like to draw everyone's attention to is to speak to the bill: to Bill 151, the Budget Measures Act. I'd like to convey to the House that this bill is about moving forward on some required changes for Ontario. Why we are moving forward is to have strong communities and a prosperous economy. How? Because this bill does a number of things. One, it creates a new and enhanced dividend tax credit to encourage investment in Ontario corporations. I don't think I heard any of the members of the opposition speak today about the content of the bill or whether they support it or do not support it. They certainly spoke about a range of issues but not about what this bill is actually proposing to do, so I don't know if they agree with that or don't agree with that.

The other issue this bill proposes is to give municipalities flexibility and additional provincial support in funding brownfields redevelopment and public infrastructure through the use of tax increment financing for two pilot projects. I guess the question I have is, do they agree or disagree with that aspect of the bill?

The other one is that it enhances the interactive digital media tax credit. Another aspect is that it increases the income threshold of the Ontario property and sales tax credits for senior couples. I say to the member for Hamilton East that this is another example of maintaining a fairness level for seniors when it comes to their property tax.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): I think I can clarify for the preceding speaker that we're not supporting this legislation and that there are very significant concerns.

I know that my colleague mentioned earlier that, a little over three years in office, this government has increased spending by \$20 billion. You know, that's mind-boggling: \$68 billion to \$88 billion. I assumed, having been around here with the former Liberal government, that they would have learned their lesson in terms of tax and spend and the payback from the electorate of Ontario, but clearly they have not.

I recall Mr. Peterson's prolific spending, and the governor of the Bank of Canada expressing public concern that the spending practices of the Liberal government at the time were driving up inflation in the country.

Mr. Petersen effectively told him to go fly a kite. But that's where we're heading, with the same sort of spending patterns on the part of this government. Taxation: bringing in heavy taxation on the people of Ontario and hoping they can get over this event next year. That's when most of the chickens are going to come home to roost. They're hoping they can get over that and somehow muddle their way through, change leaders at some point and hopefully continue to have some electoral success, but I think people are on to them. They know that this, "Say anything to get your vote;" process is not going to work again.

1750

The Liberals are hoping that, going into this election, breaking 50 promises, they can use the theme, "We really mean it this time." Well, the people of Ontario are not going to buy that.

I was in Ottawa last night for the opening of the new Royal Ottawa P3 hospital that the Premier condemned when he was opposition leader, talking about the Americanization of health care in Ontario. There he was, cutting the ribbon, talking about the big H-word.

Mr. Duguid: I'm pleased to join in this debate as well. I guess we're not shocked that the member for Leeds–Grenville is not supporting this bill, although frankly I'm a little disappointed. What we're talking about here is a bill that provides additional support for seniors, a bill that provides tax credits to strengthen businesses, something anybody would want to support.

When we look at this, there are a number of progressive and soundly thought out measures in this bill that really implement a number of the measures taken in our previous budget: measures that are helping us get waiting lists down across the province; measures that are helping Ontarians gain access to primary care; measures that are helping us provide greater investments in home care, that are helping to remove some of the problems we're having in our emergency wards; measures that are helping us create and hire more nurses right across this province; and measures that are helping us invest in hospitals.

We're talking about real dollars here. In my own riding, \$57 million are being invested in our emergency and critical care wing. That's really going to help improve the quality of care in Scarborough. Those investments are being made right across the province.

We're talking about investments in education as well that are contributing to smaller class sizes: billions of dollars to improve our schools, our classrooms; billions of much-needed capital dollars; better training for teachers; and more teachers, to ensure that our kids are getting the best education we can give them. We're also investing in post-secondary education through those budgets that we've seen come forward over the last three years—\$6.2 billion going into post-secondary education to improve access for our young people.

All of this combined is going to build a stronger economy. That's why I'm surprised that the opposition parties, both of them, don't get it; don't understand the importance of these investments.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): It's a pleasure to respond to the member from Hamilton. I would say on the bill that, first of all, it's a very, very large bill—about 200 pages long—and it has some 35 schedules with a whole bunch of attachments to it. But to look at some of the specific schedules that I have some concern with, it would be fair to say that one of them that is before each of us in Ontario is under schedule G. This is the treachery that I'm dealing with here. It's under the Corporations Tax Act; it replaces the references "Canadian investment income" and "foreign investment income" with references to "aggregate investment income." But subtly, in that same schedule, it extends the term of office for municipal politicians and school trustees from three years to four years. How it is stuck into this bill and is the poison pill, if you will, is one more reason to be not very trusting sometimes of what this McGuinty government moves forward.

There's another section here that's quite troubling as well. It's to deal with the changes in schedule A, which is the Assessment Act. We know that municipal property assessment has been a big issue, not just for us as provincial members but for municipal members as well. What they've done is they've shelved this review of assessment for a couple of years until after the election—again, another example of how they deal with things that are somewhat suspicious. Why are they not dealing with this, as opposed to shoving a lot of this stuff—they should be dealing with this as a separate bill.

I understand that there are some things in here where we need to have the revenue to make Ontario function, but every time I look at all of these schedules, right down to Z4, Z9, almost all of them do one thing that's a typical footprint for a Liberal government: They raise the taxes of the hard-working taxpayers of Ontario.

I don't think I'll be supportive, but I'm certain there'll be more said on this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: The member from Hamilton East, you have two minutes to respond.

Ms. Horwath: I want to thank the Minister of Culture, the member for Leeds–Grenville, the member for Scar-

borough Centre and the member for Durham for their remarks.

It's interesting that one of the things the Minister of Culture raised was the issue of tax incremental financing. It's interesting because my own municipality, through some community improvement area plans, has been using tax incremental financing to revitalize our downtown in terms of residential housing stock in old buildings that used to be class D office space and class C office space. So tax incremental financing is an interesting tool and one that will hopefully do some good. But the problem becomes the extent to which the properties are so below even breaking even because of the contaminations that exist on them that even tax incremental financing has not been very effective when it comes to brownfield redevelopment, because the amount of tax increment that you need to make many of those really difficult properties work is so extremely significant that the payoff time is 100 years into the future, so that it still remains unfeasible. In terms of brownfields, a real progressive government would be doing a lot more than just tax incremental financing in that regard to deal with some of our brownfield problems. I know the member from Brantford has those issues in his community as well, as he's indicating across the way.

Interestingly enough, the member for Scarborough Centre talks about all of the progressive pieces in here. One of the things that my critic raised just the other day was that this government is increasing taxes on ethanol in Ontario to equal the same as gasoline. How is that progressive? It seems to me that if we want to encourage greater use of ethanol in the province, then you sure don't tax it the exact same as gasoline. It seems silly, so you have to really look at what you're doing here and make sure you're trying to progress and move the province forward on these issues.

The Deputy Speaker: This House is adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1757.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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No. 116B

N° 116B

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 31 October 2006

Mardi 31 octobre 2006



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Honourable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
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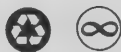
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 31 October 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 31 octobre 2006

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding standing order 77(b), I believe we have unanimous consent to call third reading of Bill 148 this evening.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is there unanimous consent to call Bill 148? Agreed.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (SEAT BELTS), 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (CEINTURES DE SÉCURITÉ)

Mrs. Cansfield moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 148, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act respecting the use of seat belts / Projet de loi 148, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne le port de la ceinture de sécurité.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Minister Cansfield has moved third reading of Bill 148. Minister?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Transportation): I'm pleased to read the third reading debate of Bill 148, our proposed legislation to amend the Ontario Highway Traffic Act. If passed, it would require one seat belt for every passenger in a motor vehicle that travels on Ontario's roads.

Our government is taking action. Our proposed legislation would stop a dangerous practice that has gone on for far too long. Our legislation would make it illegal to have more people traveling in a vehicle than there are seat belts. I urge all honourable members to help the McGuinty government close that loophole by making "one person, one seat belt" the law of Ontario.

Since seat belts were made mandatory, the number of people killed and injured in collisions has steadily dropped. Our proposed "one person, one seat belt" legislation would save even more lives.

The latest statistics show that about one third of all drivers and passengers killed in motor vehicle collisions were not wearing seat belts. I'm heartened that the most recent survey of Transport Canada found that Ontario had the second-highest rate of seat belt use in urban areas in Canada—nearly 93%. That's above the national aver-

age of 91%. But we can and must do more. For every 1% increase in seat belt usage, five lives are saved. Our goal is 100% usage.

Here's what people are saying about our proposed "one person, one seat belt" legislation. Brian Patterson, the president of the Ontario Safety League, told the CBC, "This is clarity that some people need to get themselves moving forward in a safer way." "You're in a vehicle, you're in a seat belt."

Sergeant Cam Woolley of the Ontario Provincial Police told the Globe and Mail our proposed legislation is "fantastic news." I couldn't have said it better myself. The Ontario Provincial Police applaud the government for bringing forward this legislation. The OPP reports that to date in 2006 about 80% of fatal collisions involving three or more victims involve the non-usage of seat belts. Sadly, collisions are still a leading cause of death and injury for children between one and nine years old. A properly used child safety seat can reduce the chances of death or serious injury by as much as 75%.

The McGuinty government has made the safety of children a priority. We introduced legislation in 2004 to make booster seats mandatory, and in 2005 to crack down on speeders and those who ignore the rules at crosswalks and school crossings. I urge the honourable members to pass our proposed "one person, one seat belt" legislation without delay, to further protect children and everyone who travels on Ontario roads.

The latest statistics show that for the second year in a row, Ontario does have the safest roads in North America. I am proud that Ontario is a leader in road safety. We all can be proud that Ontario is a leader in road safety.

In 1976, under the Honourable Mr. Snow, Ontario was the first jurisdiction in North America to make wearing seat belts mandatory. Our proposed legislation will take Ontario to the next level of road safety so that this province can continue to be a leader. I urge honourable members to give this legislation their enthusiastic support.

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The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments? Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to participate very briefly on Bill 148.

I just want to put on the record a bit of the historical context here. As we all know, this was as a result of a tragic accident on October 14, 2006. Our leader, John Tory, has expressed his condolences to the families of those victims who were tragically lost. But what should

be remembered in the history of it all is that it was approximately 30 years ago that Bill Davis, the Conservative Premier of the day, introduced this bill. There were exemptions in the bill at that time because of the manufacturers, as some of the cars had seat belts and some didn't, and some only had them in the front and didn't have them in the rear. So there was a schedule of exemptions which existed for some time.

In fact, as recently as last year, one year ago now, the president of the Canada Safety Council, Emile Therien, wrote to the then Minister of Transportation to advise him of this loophole. In that one-year period, I'm certain there were lives unnecessarily lost. I don't disparagingly point any fingers, but it should be part of the official record that inaction is no excuse for action that should have been taken under wise advice. But in the spirit of unity and in the spirit of co-operation and public safety, our leader, John Tory, has put forward the insistence that we move quickly on this and, as such, we have.

In the overall discussion limited to the few minutes we've agreed to, I just wanted to say that we moved several well-intended amendments, without any malicious intent whatsoever. Those amendments were to clarify some of the exemption rules, the exemptions allowed under the minister's direction, which we felt were unnecessarily creating more uncertainty, even for the enforcement officers. I just want to move these here.

One of them—section 1 of the bill, subsection 106(3) of the Highway Traffic Act—was moved with respect to demerit points. We wanted to make sure that all persons in the vehicle over 16 years of age other than the driver would not be receiving demerit points. All of the amendments—

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Why?

Mr. O'Toole: Because you can't tell. They have a right and a responsibility. You never know what the legislation is going to be permissive or inclusive of.

Another amendment we moved was to section 1 of the bill, clause 106(6)(a.1): "That subsection 106(6) of the Highway Traffic Act, as set out in section 1 of bill, be amended by adding the following clause:

"(a.1) who is driving or is a passenger in a historic vehicle, as defined in section 7, that is not equipped with seat belt assemblies."

This was talking about historic vehicle and vintage vehicle owners, who had lobbied members and were asking in writing that we shouldn't be retrofitting. In fact, I would say that we had agreement on that with the Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers' Association as well, which said that they shouldn't be tinkering; Mark Nantais said that. But they did not support that amendment. They did say to us that they would exempt those vehicles in regulation, and I will take it under good democratic participation that you will indeed follow through on your promises, which would be exceptional.

I moved another amendment there: "That 106(6) of the Highway Traffic Act, as set out in section 1 of the bill, be amended by striking out 'or' at the end of clause (b), by adding 'or' at the end of"—and whatever. What this was

actually doing was dealing with farm practices—that is, vehicles traveling on roads other than provincial roads under 40 kilometres per hour—and the movement of workers in the agricultural sector. Again, that amendment was turned down. But I will say, in fairness, that the parliamentary assistant did assure us that there would be public consultations with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the Christian Farmers of Ontario, the farmers' union and other stakeholders in agriculture to ensure that this isn't going to be another barrier or impediment for agricultural practices. At the same time, we categorically understand and respect that anyone travelling unbelted in any vehicle is potentially at risk, so we did address that.

Under section 1 of the bill, clauses 106(8)(e) and (f) of the Highway Traffic Act: This was with respect to the whole section of the bill dealing with exemptions and those classes of people who could be exempted from wearing seat belts. Our leader, John Tory, was quite open about closing the number of exemptions that the minister could make, and we are disappointed that that wasn't agreed to. In fact, every amendment we moved, including one that was brought to me that didn't directly relate to the bill, which was dealt with—and the committee worked very co-operatively. I would say that with respect. All parties tried to work with this expeditiously and put safety before politics.

This section dealt with the issue of air bags in vehicles with children under 12 in the front seat. This was subsection 106(3), and I'll read it as follows:

"Section 106.3, as set out in section 1 of the bill"—as amended by the committee—"be amended by adding the following subsection:

"Front seat use

"(3.1) No passenger under the age of 12 shall occupy a seat position in the front seat of a motor vehicle if the front seat side air bag system is installed and activated."

We've heard some reports from the Canadian Safety League and others that they were dangerous. All the amendments we moved were set aside or more or less voted down by the government, and in the spirit of co-operation, I just wanted to say that we feel the necessity to put this stuff on the record. We work co-operatively. Our leader, John Tory, and our caucus are supportive of putting safety first. With that, I conclude my remarks.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments? Further debate?

Mr. Kormos: I'm pleased that we are speaking to and completing consideration of Bill 148 this evening. This is very important legislation. I want to thank and commend the government House leader for his co-operation and collaborative approach to this, which made it possible for this bill to be expedited, notwithstanding that it had committee consideration and is now having, and is the subject matter of, third reading debate. It's that approach by the government House leader that makes it possible for a Legislature to respond quickly when the circumstances, as demonstrated by the horrible motor vehicle accident, indicated there was a gap, a hole, in the Highway Traffic Act. It's been there for many a year. That doesn't mean it

isn't imperative that we respond to it and address it as promptly as possible.

I want to make something very clear. It's my view that in the Criminal Code, criminal negligence, for instance, would be an appropriate charge to lay against a driver who drove a motor vehicle, put that motor vehicle into motion, without ensuring that passengers were properly belted. Unfortunately, that Criminal Code charge only kicks in once there's bodily harm or death. It's a very serious charge in and of itself and people should be cognizant of that.

I also want to thank the people who participated in the committee hearings. Again, it's regrettable that but two days were available for them, but the opposition parties saw a need to expedite the passage of the bill. The contribution made by participants in those public hearings was a valuable one. I don't diminish anybody's contribution to the public hearings, but I especially want to refer to and thank Brian Patterson, who is the president and general manager of the Ontario Safety League, for promptly responding to a request to participate in these hearings; and Peter Tabuns, my colleague from Toronto—Danforth, who has allowed me to speak to this bill tonight in his stead—and I'm grateful to him for that—and who participated in those committee hearings, of course. I want to thank all the participants, but I especially want to thank Brian Patterson. I also want to thank Brian Lawrie, who is the president of POINTTS Advisory Ltd. Mr. Lawrie of course is a former police officer with a great deal of experience and is now president of POINTTS, which is Ontario's leading paralegal firm dealing with Highway Traffic Act matters. A number of its paralegals are former police officers—not all of them. There was at least one former justice of the peace, amongst others, working for POINTTS.

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I want to refer to their comments in particular because they—and I'm grateful to them for doing this—addressed the role of the driver in all of this. It is New Democrats' strong view that the driver has to be responsible for the safety of the vehicle. Clearly, the government agrees in some respects, because in section 1 of this bill, which will create a new section 106, a driver is prohibited from driving a vehicle on a highway that has had altered seat belts, modified seat belts, removed seat belts or seat belts not operating properly through lack of maintenance—I'm going to get to that in just a minute—notwithstanding that there's anybody in the seating position where that belt's located. Be forewarned: If the seat belts in the rear of your car aren't working properly, but there's nobody in the rear of your car—there's only a driver and a front-seat passenger, both wearing seat belts that are working in a proper manner and not modified or altered—that driver is still committing an offence. That may be perceived as peculiar by some, because really the effort here is to create an offence for a passenger to occupy a position for which there is not a seat belt in working condition. So there is no passenger, yet the driver is still guilty of a Highway Traffic Act offence.

I just raise that; it's just an observation. It's part of this inherent contradiction that goes around the role of the driver, that goes to the role of the driver. So there's an interesting, peculiar aspect of this legislation: that the driver has committed an offence under the Highway Traffic Act if he's operating a vehicle in which there are seat belts that are not operating or that have been modified or removed, even if he doesn't have a passenger in that position where the seat belt is not operating or is modified or removed, and even if he never has any intention of having a passenger in that position. That seems to contradict the general tone of the bill, which says that nobody should be a passenger in a vehicle unless there is a properly operating seat belt available to that passenger. Do you understand what I'm saying? Do you see just a little bit of a conflict there? That's going to generate some interest when somebody's charged under section 106.

The other and perhaps more telling part of the bill is that a driver is held responsible for ensuring that people under the age of 16 are belted. In other words, the passenger who's under 16 doesn't get charged and convicted of an offence if they're unbelted, but the driver does. But if a passenger is 16 or over, the driver is not responsible for that passenger being unbelted and it's the passenger who gets charged and presumably convicted. I have no quarrel with the passenger being convicted, but why are we somehow presuming that people under the age of 16 yet over the age of 12, which is the age of commencement of criminal responsibility, shouldn't be responsible for not abiding by the law? I think that's an incredible oversight, to not make young people under the age of 16 as responsible for buckling up as their older co-passengers are under the Highway Traffic Act.

It then goes to the New Democratic Party's request and proposal for an amendment that would make the driver responsible at the end of the day. I made reference to Brian Patterson from the Ontario Safety League and Brian Lawrie from POINTTS, both of whom supported that proposition. I think it's a serious oversight, one, because we're making a driver liable for operating a vehicle that has an inoperative seat belt, whether or not a passenger is in that position. So there's an understanding, it appears, that they need to make the driver responsible. The driver is the captain of the ship. The driver is the one who has the capacity to put that vehicle in motion or to bring it to a stop.

New Democrats moved amendments, which were defeated, that would have made the driver responsible in that regard. It's our position that the onus should be on a driver not to put a vehicle in motion unless and until every passenger in that vehicle is adequately and properly belted.

I want to just point out the gaping hole in the qualification in section 106 of the Highway Traffic Act, and that is "is not operating properly through lack of maintenance." Please, what is maintenance of a seat belt and why is that there? It's either operating properly or not operating properly. And if it's not operating properly, I

don't care why it's not operating properly, through lack of maintenance or any other reason, that's an unsafe vehicle. That's the inference to be drawn from the language of the legislation. So the driver doesn't put that vehicle in motion. I just find it peculiar. Again, this is what happens when you do things hastily, when you rush things: You come up with these sorts of problems.

One of our concerns around the driver's liability for unbelted passengers 16 and over is, for instance, in the case of farm labourers—chicken catchers in particular. We have a lot of poultry farms down where I come from and we have a lot of people who work as chicken catchers. Ms. Van Bommel is well aware of that trade, that vocation. It's incredibly hard work, it really is. It's dirty, hot, dusty, disease-ridden work, and chicken catchers—

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): Chicken cacciatore.

Mr. Kormos: Look, I know too many chicken catchers to mock them. They're incredibly hard-working people, some of whom support families by chicken catching. Some of the teenagers are doing it for part-time work, but trust me, most teenagers don't do it for very long. They simply don't last very long. One of the problems in that industry is that the chicken-catching contractors hire low-wage labour and take them out to farm sites usually in the dark of the night, because the chickens are caught in the middle of the night in preparation for very early morning shipping to markets and abattoir operations. I've spoken with chicken catchers who talk about being loaded up into a van, and never mind no seat belts—no seats; huge holes in the floor panels.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I hate to interrupt the member and I hope it doesn't disrupt the flow of the case that he's trying to put forward. I'm citing standing order 23(k) with respect to a member who uses abusive or insulting language.

Mr. Speaker, earlier this evening, one of the members of our caucus, the member for Simcoe North, was engaging in a two-minute response and referencing policing costs in the Caledonia situation, and he was interrupted. We've just received a copy of Instant Hansard which confirms that the Minister of Labour accused those of us concerned about policing costs and the ongoing challenges in Caledonia as being "rednecks." That's not an insult just to the member, Mr. Speaker, but to all of those good people who are very concerned about the situation in that part of the province. Given that the minister is present this evening, I would ask you to require an apology.

The Deputy Speaker: I can't require it. I don't have the copy of Instant Hansard that you may have access to, but—the minister?

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): If the honourable member was not pleased with that, I withdraw the comment.

The Deputy Speaker: Withdrawn. Thank you. Member for Niagara Centre.

Mr. Kormos: I'm going to have to back up a few minutes because the train of thought—

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Chicken cacciatore, and teenagers and vans.

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Mr. Kormos: Look, I think it's a serious matter when workers, especially non-union workers—because, of course, in Ontario, agricultural workers can't unionize—are forced into extremely unsafe working conditions when the job, in and of itself, is dangerous enough to start with.

There's a serious problem in the transportation of chicken catchers, among others, by contractors who have no regard whatsoever for their safety, for whom there are not only no seat belts, there are no seats. The problem with not including culpability for the driver is that there's no disincentive for a driver to be hauling these people around to different farm sites.

I'll go one further. In the fruit farms, in the fruit orchards of Ontario, many of which are right down where I come from, seasonal workers coming into Niagara are transported from their bunkhouses to the orchard, sometimes by very responsible and conscientious farmers, other times by employers far less conscientious. I've seen the vehicles in which these people are transported—once again, where they're crowded into vans with not only no seat belts but no seats. And you say they're to be charged and not the driver? How do we halt that sort of activity unless and until we charge the driver so that that driver knows he or she doesn't put that vehicle in motion unless and until people are belted up?

The one comment that I received was, "How can a driver be responsible for ongoingly monitoring his or her passengers to ensure they remain belted?" Well, that's precisely what the government, in its legislation, expects them to do when it's children under the age of 16, because the government's saying, "Yes, the driver has to monitor that passenger to ensure that he or she is wearing the seat belt continuously," because the passenger happens to be 15, or 15 and a half, or 15 years, 11 months and 28 days.

In terms of exempting young people from responsibility, I think it's a very bad message not to be telling 14- and 15-year-olds, "You have as much responsibility to ensure that you're belted up when you're 14 and 15 as you will have when you're 16 or 17," because of the prospect of being charged through the Highway Traffic Act.

The other interesting consideration is whether or not this addresses the concerns that many have expressed in this chamber about people riding in the backs of pickup trucks, and that, I have no doubt, will be tested or determined by the courts. I'm confident that a police officer somewhere in Ontario will charge an occupant of the bed of a box of a pickup truck under this amendment, this new part of the Highway Traffic Act.

However, take a look at this: "every person who is at least 16 years old and is a passenger in a motor vehicle." The qualification for being belted is being in a motor

vehicle, and it's unfortunate. It's inevitable when we have to deal speedily with the demand for legislation. I suspect there's going to be an argument made that the occupant of the bed of the box of a pickup truck is not in a motor vehicle.

So while the government might have had the opportunity to address that issue in the first instance through this legislation, it again was a lost opportunity. Again, I'm not being critical, other than to point out it's unfortunate that we don't seize these moments, seize these opportunities, and use them to better benefit.

There was some discussion about the exemptions, and that causes concern. Down where I come from and in most parts of the province, there are automobile hobbyists and collectors, antique car enthusiasts who invest a great deal of money, a great deal of sweat equity, into their motor vehicles, restoring motor vehicles, taking them to car shows, riding them at meets. It's a great attraction for people in these communities to see these parades of vehicles, be they as recent as the 1960s and 1970s or as old as the 1920s and 1930s, parading through town. As we all know, most of these vehicles don't have seat belts. Vehicles well into the 1960s, when a belt was optional—it was an option when you purchased a vehicle—may only have seat belts for the front passenger of the vehicle and the driver.

There's a real dilemma. On the one hand, I think we want to accommodate and encourage hobbyists, huge numbers of them, who preserve a part of our heritage by collecting, restoring and maintaining these vehicles; yet on the other hand, if we're saying that driving in a vehicle without a seat belt is a very dangerous thing, sufficiently dangerous that the state is going to intervene, one then questions how and where the framework is for the exemptions. I am not proposing in any way, shape or form that antique vehicles should be taken off the road by virtue of not having seat belts; what I am suggesting is that there should be a standard that is consistently applied for the exemptions.

There is also clearly no standard as to what constitutes the grounds for a certificate by a medical doctor that would exempt a passenger or driver from wearing a seat belt—a legally certified medical practitioner certifying that the person is unable, for medical reasons, to wear a seat belt. I'm not aware of any standard against which the doctor has to perform, or because of a person's size, build or other physical characteristic, unable to wear a seat belt—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: I think the member for Nepean—Carleton may want to withdraw that.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean—Carleton): Okay. I withdraw.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Niagara Centre.

Mr. Kormos: A remarkable observation, Speaker. Never have I been so on point during an address and so frequently interrupted by the Speaker. I hope this is like a bank account where I can put this into the credit side of the bank account and maybe make some withdrawals

down the road a little bit when I need them. Think about it: I've never been so on subject yet more frequently interrupted by the Speaker. That's just the way things happen some days.

New Democrats support the legislation. It's going to go to a vote this evening, and I trust it's going to be proclaimed promptly. I trust as well that there is going to be some educational campaigning about it.

I heard some of the comments. There was a government member who questioned, "What does a family do that has a sedan-type car with only three seat belts in the back and four children? Are they forced to buy a van?" Well, yeah. If you're going to carry all four children at one time, you use a vehicle that can accommodate all four children, or five children or, God bless you, six or seven children—wherever your passions take you, in terms of the number of children you have. We're talking about safety here.

One of the things that was unfortunate—and I know legislative research tried to accommodate my request at the subcommittee meeting on this matter—was the whole issue of vehicle design—

Interjection.

Mr. Kormos: Mr. Zimmer interjected and I've lost my train of thought again. I appreciate the member for Willowdale being here tonight on Halloween. I very much appreciate him being here. But just for the life of me, I've never been so rattled by a heckle before that I've actually lost my train of thought and am unable to—I've never felt compelled to repeat myself before by virtue of a heckle. So excuse me, Speaker. Mr. Zimmer has rattled me, and if it takes me a little longer than I had intended to, you'll have to bear with me.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke): Way to go, Zimmer.

Mr. Kormos: Mr. Yakabuski responds or remarks.

New Democrats are going to support the legislation. Of course we are. It's reasonable legislation and it fills a gap. As I say, it's imperative that there be an educational campaign. People have got to be advised that this is the law. I trust that the police, the OPP in particular who do highway patrols—and lord knows there are too few of them, but they do their best under circumstances where they're grossly understaffed. I trust that there's going to be a period of time in which there are warnings given as part of this educational campaign, but having said that, there is yet one final observation in terms of what New Democrats see as a lost opportunity. Our view is that a vehicle—just like the government agrees, in section 106 of the act, section 1 of this bill—that has a faulty seat belt, even if a person isn't using it at the time or isn't in that position, is *prima facie* a defective vehicle or an unsafe vehicle such that the driver should be charged. I say the police should have, and need, the power, when a vehicle is occupied by persons who do not have seat belts available to them and who are not wearing those seat belts—just like they would pull over and pull the plates off of a motor vehicle that had a faulty exhaust system, faulty ball joints or faulty tie rod ends such that the

occupants of that vehicle or other users of the highway are endangered—to pull that vehicle over and make sure that it doesn't travel a further inch until it has the right number of occupants in it safely secured. And if that means that some people have to exit and go off on their own—when you've got a potential criminal negligence charge, how can you expect a police officer to give the ticket and then say, "By the way, I'll see you after you've rolled the vehicle and somebody's dead because there are too many people in the vehicle and not enough seat belts"?

I want to make sure that folks can get to their Halloween obligations. The member for Willowdale is already in costume, and I don't want to in any way undermine his trick-or-treating tonight. However, I suspect that when his constituents recognize him as the Liberal member for Willowdale, they'll comment that they've been subject to far more tricks than they have been treats by the government. They may travel to Mr. Zimmer's home and soap his windows instead of expecting him to soap theirs.

I hope everybody enjoys their Halloween festivities, and I thank you very much for letting me participate in this debate. I thank Mr. Tabuns once again for letting me speak on his behalf and for his work on committee. I

again thank all of the participants in that committee—all of whom came on very short notice, prepared very skilful presentations and were of great assistance to the committee—and legislative counsel, of course, who drafted the NDP amendments along with other opposition amendments, again with very short notice.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments? Does any other member wish to speak?

If not, Mrs. Cansfield has moved third reading of Bill 148, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act respecting the use of seat belts. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now passed and be entitled as in the motion.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, in order that members may go out trick-or-treating, I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: The Government House Leader has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House is adjourned until 1:30 of the clock on November 1.

The House adjourned at 1923.

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Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Nepean-Carleton	MacLeod, Lisa (PC)
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (L) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Niagara Falls	Craiton, Kim (L)
Guelph-Wellington	Sandals, Liz (L)	Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Nipissing	Smith, Monique M. (L)
		Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Oak Ridges	Klees, Frank (PC)	Stormont–Dundas– Charlottenburgh	Brownell, Jim (L)
Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (L) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Thornhill	Racco, Mario G. (L)
Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Mauro, Bill (L)
Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (L) Premier and President of the Council, Minister of Research and Innovation / premier ministre et président du Conseil, ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior- Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L) Minister of Health Promotion / ministre de la Promotion de la santé	Timiskaming–Cochrane	Ramsay, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Ottawa–Orléans	McNeely, Phil (L)		Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Ottawa–Vanier	Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (L) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L) Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / vice-premier ministre, ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Toronto Centre–Rosedale / Toronto-Centre–Rosedale	Tabuns, Peter (ND)
Parkdale–High Park	DiNovo, Cheri (ND)		Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Parry Sound–Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Toronto–Danforth	Sorbara, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (L) Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre des Finances, président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
Perth–Middlesex	Wilkinson, John (L)	Trinity–Spadina	Arnott, Ted (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Peterborough	Leal, Jeff (L)	Vaughan–King–Aurora	Elliott, Christine (PC)
Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge	Arthurs, Wayne (L)		Zimmer, David (L)
Prince Edward–Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)		Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L) Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce, ministre délégué à la Condition féminine
Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Yakabuski, John (PC)		Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L) Minister of Energy / ministre de l'Énergie
Sarnia–Lambton	Di Cocco, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (L) Minister of Culture / ministre de la Culture	Waterloo–Wellington	Kwinter, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (L) Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Sault Ste. Marie	Oraziotti, David (L)		Munro, Julia (PC)
Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Duguid, Brad (L)		Sergio, Mario (L)
Scarborough East / Scarborough-Est	Chambers, Hon. / L'hon. Mary Anne V. (L) Minister of Children and Youth Services / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse	Whitby–Ajax	
Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	Willowdale	
Scarborough–Agincourt	Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (L) Minister of Government Services / ministre des Services gouvernementaux	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Scarborough–Rouge River	Balkissoon, Bas (L)		
Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Windsor–St. Clair	
Simcoe–Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	
St. Catharines	Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L) Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, government House leader / ministre du Tourisme, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées, leader parlementaire du gouvernement	York North / York-Nord	
St. Paul's	Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L) Attorney General / procureur général	York West / York-Ouest	
Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)	Burlington	Vacant
		Markham	Vacant
		York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	Vacant

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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No. 117A

N° 117A

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**
Second Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**
Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 1 November 2006

Mercredi 1^{er} novembre 2006



Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 1 November 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 1^{er} novembre 2006

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): The McGuinty government has gotten so used to wasting government money that they have forgotten where it comes from. It comes from hard-working taxpayers like the farmers in my riding, like the people who work hard at the CAMI plant in Ingersoll or at DDM Plastics in Tillsonburg. These people pay their taxes because they want education for their children and quality health care.

No one that I've talked to asked the McGuinty government to spend \$6 million of their money on dropping the "C" from the OLCG. They were happy with the old trillium, and they certainly didn't agree to have \$219,000 of their money spent on redesigning it. They all remember the commercial where McGuinty promised that he wouldn't raise their taxes, but none of them asked the Liberals to spend their hard-earned tax dollars on giving that advertising company fat contracts. They don't understand, and neither do I, why that company, Bensimon Byrne, now gets paid a retainer of \$78,000 a month for a contract with the same description as the contract for which they used to get \$38,000 a month. The McGuinty government seems to think it's all right to use taxpayers' dollars to extend appointments for their friends long beyond the term of government and give them all raises, some as much as 300%.

The McGuinty government has shown a lack of concern for taxpayers by continually breaking their promises. Now it is showing a lack of respect for their hard-earned tax dollars by giving them to their friends.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): I rise in the House today to applaud McMaster University, Mohawk College, Hamilton Police Service and hundreds of volunteers for making a positive connection with our youth. Bullying is a serious matter with widespread implications and requires everyone's attention and support. Tracy Vaillancourt, an associate professor of psychology at McMaster University, is the creator of Basketball vs. Bullying. She has spearheaded this annual event for the

past four years, with attendance reaching nearly 45,000 students from across Ontario. The message is that young people need to talk to their parents about the serious issue of bullying.

On October 19, the city of Hamilton hosted the world's largest anti-bullying conference. Over 6,000 youth from across Ontario congregated in Copps Coliseum to learn how to prevent bullying. The objective of this conference was to give youth the confidence to raise their voice against bullying and offer strategies for change. The educational sessions were made up of short skits, performances by basketball performer Q-Mack, TV Ontario host Milton Barnes, motivational speaker Johnnie Williams, and an exciting basketball game featuring the McMaster Marauders and the Alberta Golden Bears.

I am proud to report that the Ontario government has introduced an anti-bullying strategy in which they have created a three-year partnership with the kids' helpline, launched a registry for bullying prevention and given additional funding of \$7.83 million to school boards to purchase or expand their bullying prevention program in their schools. We've also made additional resources available for students and parents.

I want to thank Professor Vaillancourt for this initiative, as well as all the people involved in Hamilton for making this annual event such a success. Anything which contributes to giving young people the confidence to communicate with their peers and family, emphasizing the important message that bullying is absolutely not acceptable, is worth our support and commendation.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): Dalton McGuinty has never seen government waste and mismanagement he didn't like. Recall the 2003 election: Dalton McGuinty ran around the province promising anything and everything to get elected. Despite promising not to raise taxes, he brought in the single largest tax increase in the history of Ontario. He originally disguised it as a health premium, but we all knew better.

Dalton McGuinty tried to confuse people about long wait times by spending \$2 million on inaccurate, partisan advertisements. That \$2 million could have been better spent putting doctors in emergency rooms for an extra 11,764 hours on duty. The \$90 million wasted closing CCACs could have been used to start upgrading 13,298 long-term-care beds and to increase the food allowance for seniors to \$7 a day; at present, the allowance is less

than you get in prison. Why did the Liberals divert \$16 million to Dalton McGuinty's "I won't raise your taxes" ad firm? That money could have hired 195 additional registered nurses to work in long-term-care homes. Don't forget McGuinty's infamous health bureaucracies, the LHINs. They've taken \$2 million and bought fancy new furniture.

My message to Dalton McGuinty: We can't afford the waste, and we can't stomach the deception.

EDUCATION GRANTS

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): The Minister of Education has announced yet another new million-dollar grant program, called Parents Reaching Out. This new million-dollar Ministry of Education fund is promoted as being available to school councils and community groups to help support parents who face cultural, linguistic or other barriers in participating in their children's education.

While the idea is good, I wonder whether the government really wants parents to know about this fund. The deadline for this funding approval is November 21, 2006. All projects need to be completed by June 30, 2007. One wonders whether the ministry actually wants parents to get this money, with such a short deadline. As anyone who's worked with schools and community groups realizes, putting together a viable project proposal within three weeks is, at best, a challenging task.

Since we have informed our constituents about this, several constituents have attempted to contact the Ministry of Education about this program. They have gotten caught in a lengthy and time-consuming tangle of voice-mail menu options that don't connect them directly and efficiently to the grant's coordinator. If you are not able to get through on this line, I would urge everyone to contact the Minister of Education, Kathleen Wynne, directly at 416-325-2600. And I would encourage every MPP sitting in this Legislature to send out information to make this new grant program widely known to all their constituents.

1340

ST. LOUIS ADULT LEARNING AND CONTINUING EDUCATION CENTRES

Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): On Friday, October 20, the St. Louis Adult Learning Centre and Continuing Education Centres celebrated 20 years of service in Waterloo region. St. Louis has become very well known in my community, offering programs that are available for everyone, from infants to seniors.

With a high school diploma program, English-as-a-second-language training and international languages courses, St. Louis continues to thrive. Today it serves as a wonderful example of Catholic education, serving a multi-faith, multicultural community of excellence, innovation and inspiration.

I was pleased to join Kitchener mayor Carl Zehr, Father Fred Scinto, representatives of the Waterloo Catholic District School Board and St. Louis students to help mark this occasion.

The success of St. Louis has been achieved in large part through the work of its staff. I would like to congratulate the principal Paul Cox, Krystyna Freiburger, Luci Santamaria, as well as Tom Forestell and Francesco Robles on this milestone. I would also like to acknowledge Luiza Coelho, Emilia Duarte, Yolanda Garzon, Lidia Goncalves, Karen Hurdal, Pat Kempel, Fatima Mota and Maria Alvarez. These staff members have worked at the school for the past 20 years and have allowed it to progress from serving a small clientele to one that assists over 10,000 students each year.

With the participation of all of the staff, the organization of Lilianna Sosnowski and the children who presented a beautiful quilt to mark the occasion, the event was a testament to the sense of community within St. Louis and throughout Waterloo region. Congratulations on 20 years.

NATIVE LAND DISPUTE

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I rise in the House today to point out that the gross mishandling of the Caledonia file by the McGuinty Liberals has resulted in millions of dollars of unnecessary and reckless government spending. It seems this government just woke up after eight months of the Caledonia occupation to discover they can't handle the file, after spending millions of dollars. So now they are blaming the federal government and asking them to pick up the tab for the spending related to Caledonia that the feds had no say in approving.

Yesterday in the House, the Premier mentioned a long list of items the government has covered in Caledonia, but he didn't attach a price tag to any of them. Today, the Liberals want \$40 million from Ottawa, which includes \$15 million for policing costs, but who knows how much they will want from the feds tomorrow.

I've mentioned in the House before that the Caledonia issue actually stemmed from litigation rather than a land claim. Aboriginal affairs minister David Ramsay agreed, because several months ago he described the occupation as "an accounting claim, by and large." Mr. Ramsay's own website did not initially include the Six Nations or Caledonia property under land claims and related negotiations.

This government has been all over the map with the Caledonia file. One day it was a land claim; the next minute it wasn't. Now the government believes it is a land claim, so they can pin the blame and the file on the federal government in a purely partisan political move. We think Ontarians deserve better than a government that attacks its federal counterparts while trying to pass the buck on Caledonia.

NIPISSING UNIVERSITY

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): Yes, yesterday was a proud day in the district of Nipissing for the city of North Bay and particularly for Nipissing University.

The Globe and Mail yesterday published the University Report Card 2006. In it, it ranked Canadian universities and compared large, medium, small and very small universities. They were ranked on the following areas: quality of education, academic reputation, quality of student services, quality of teaching, variety of courses, class size, libraries, student-faculty interaction, most satisfied students, availability of financial assistance, quality of career preparation, food services, fitness and sports facilities, student residences and diversity of extra-curricular activities.

In those 15 areas, Nipissing University in North Bay ranked first in nine categories in the small university section, including, in my estimation, the most important areas—quality of education, quality of student services, quality of teaching and most satisfied students—beating out such universities as St. Francis Xavier, Trent, University of Lethbridge and Laurentian.

In a feature article on Nipissing University, the Globe noted that despite confusion about its location “that hasn’t stopped Nipissing from consistently besting such legacy-rich institutions as McGill University and University of Toronto in student satisfaction ratings.” We know exactly where Nipissing University is. It’s in North Bay. It’s a proud day for North Bay and Nipissing University. I want to congratulate Dennis Mock, the president, who is mentioned in very high esteem in this article. I congratulate the faculty, the staff and specifically the students of Nip U. I am proud to represent the hottest small school in the country.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): I rise today to speak about this government and how it is helping to prepare the workforce and upgrade their skills. As this House knows, we have already taken a number of positive steps: We’re on track to increase the number of new apprenticeship registrations to 26,000 annually in 2008; we created a tax credit to encourage apprenticeships; and, in good faith, we signed the labour market partnership agreement with the federal government in November last year.

Unfortunately, we are sitting at the table by ourselves. We need the federal government to come through. They committed to give Ontarians \$1.3 billion, and we have yet to see that flow. Without that money, Ontarians in need will not have the same opportunities as other Canadians to help them get jobs. Those who need help specifically with literacy and essential skills won’t get that help. Some of the most vulnerable groups are aboriginals, older workers, displaced workers and those with

disabilities. They will not be getting the assistance they need and deserve.

Ontarians deserve to be treated fairly. We are asking the federal government to honour that signed agreement. The Prime Minister endorsed it during his campaign last year. This is not about politics. It is about people, and it is about fairness. So I ask that all members in this House call their federal counterparts and help us get what was committed so that we can help those who need it the most and deserve it.

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): I want to speak about partnership and federal responsibility. It’s bad enough that the federal government has now walked away from the Kelowna and Kyoto accords, literacy programs, our First Nation kids, the environment and our farmers, but now they seem poised to bolt on the fundamental commitment to treat Ontario fairly. Ontario is the economic engine of this great country, but without the support of our federal government it will be increasingly difficult to protect Ontario’s ability to create prosperity. Ontario currently receives less federal funding per capita than other provinces for key services like health care and post-secondary education. That’s simply wrong and begs the obvious question: Why?

It’s time to correct this unfairness for all Canadians, including the 39% who reside in Ontario. Over 200 Ontario business leaders and over 120 municipalities have already passed resolutions calling for fairness for Ontario. What we need from members opposite is assistance in pushing the case for Ontario with their friends at the federal level. Unless and until they show a willingness to join Premier McGuinty in doing so, any talk about standing up for Canada is little more than rhetorical nonsense.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I’d ask for unanimous consent to wear the MADD ribbon.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Martiniuk has asked for unanimous consent to wear the MADD ribbon in this place. Agreed? Agreed.

VISITORS

Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I have visitors from my area. They are my colleagues in the dental and medical professions, along with their families. They belong to an association called the Northern Indian Medical and Dental Association of Canada. Most of them work in hospitals across the greater Toronto area, reducing wait times working in emergency departments. I appreciate their services to Ontarians. They are Dr. Manohar Joshi; Dr. Sushma Joshi; Dr. Namita Joshi; Dr. Asha Seth; Mr. Arun Seth; my dear wife, Jaswant Kular; Dr. Devinder Sehgal; Mrs. Suki Sehgal; Dr. Bhushan

Sood; Dr. Vijay Bansal; Dr. Kharak Singh Grewal; Dr. Surinder Sidhu; and his wife, Harbinder Sidhu. I welcome them to Queen's Park.

1350

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I want to welcome to the gallery today Miss Eden Orr, who is a grade 9 student at Bais Yaakov high school in Toronto. She is here today and has presented to me a petition to the Ontario Legislature to end discrimination. I would ask all members to welcome her to the gallery today.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: It's a very special day for me and for Perth–Middlesex. We have our page Olivia Steven, and both her father and grandfather, Ken and George, are here. As well, I'm joined by my wife, Loretta Shannon, and my sons, Liam and Breen Wilkinson. Welcome.

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm delighted to recognize in the members' west gallery Mr. Reid Bigland, who is the president and CEO of DaimlerChrysler, who has joined with us, Lori Shalhoub and Doug Jure. We had a great discussion on health and wellness in the workplace. We welcome the president of DaimlerChrysler.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I would like to draw members' attention to the members' west gallery and welcome our former colleague Leo Jordan from the fine riding of Lanark–Renfrew, who served here in this place in the 35th and 36th Parliaments.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AMENDMENT ACT (SALARY IN LIEU OF RETIREMENT CREDIT), 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE (TRAITEMENT TENANT LIEU DE DROIT À RETRAITE)

Mr. Runciman moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 157, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act with respect to salaries in lieu of retirement credits /
Projet de loi 157, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative en ce qui concerne le traitement tenant lieu de droit à retraite.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): If passed, this legislation would remove elements of age discrimination against certain members of the Legislative Assembly.

VISITORS

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to welcome my son, Julian Leonetti, and his friend, Brendan Angles, who are here on Take Our Kids to Work Day.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move that pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Wednesday, November 1, 2006, for the purpose of considering government business. Last night, they were trick-or-treating.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1354 to 1359.

The Speaker: Mr. Bradley has moved government notice of motion 221. All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Di Cocco, Caroline	Munro, Julia
Arthurs, Wayne	Dombrowsky, Leona	O'Toole, John
Balkissoon, Bas	Duguid, Brad	Oraziotti, David
Barrett, Toby	Hardeman, Ernie	Parsons, Ernie
Bartolucci, Rick	Hoy, Pat	Patten, Richard
Bentley, Christopher	Jeffrey, Linda	Peters, Steve
Bountrogianni, Marie	Klees, Frank	Phillips, Gerry
Bradley, James J.	Kular, Kuldip	Pupatello, Sandra
Brotan, Laurel C.	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Brownell, Jim	Leal, Jeff	Tascona, Joseph N.
Bryant, Michael	Marsales, Judy	Tory, John
Cansfield, Donna H.	Martiniuk, Gerry	Van Bommel, Maria
Caplan, David	Matthews, Deborah	Watson, Jim
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Mauro, Bill	Wilkinson, John
Chudleigh, Ted	McMeekin, Ted	Wilson, Jim
Colle, Mike	McNeely, Phil	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Craitor, Kim	Miller, Norm	Zimmer, David
Crozier, Bruce	Milloy, John	
Delaney, Bob	Mossop, Jennifer F.	

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
DiNovo, Cheri	Martel, Shelley	Yakabuski, John
Horwath, Andrea	Murdoch, Bill	
Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 55; the nays are 10.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

PRIVATE CAREER COLLEGES

COLLÈGES PRIVÉS

D'ENSEIGNEMENT PROFESSIONNEL

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): The McGuinty government believes that the key to Ontario's prosperity lies in our people. The best jobs and the most investment go to the places with the best-educated and most highly skilled workforce.

Nous sommes déterminés à aider les Ontariennes et les Ontariens à atteindre leur potentiel. Nous savons que l'apprentissage est nécessaire à la création d'une main-d'œuvre forte qui, à son tour, est essentielle à une économie florissante.

Through our Reaching Higher plan, we're investing in our publicly funded colleges and universities so the people of Ontario will see improved access, accountability and quality in our entire post-secondary education system. Today I'm pleased to tell the House that the McGuinty government is also doing more to improve the quality and accountability of private career colleges.

Ontario's more than 500 private career colleges are independent private businesses that prepare about 38,000 students for the job market each year. The schools are located in almost 70 communities across Ontario and offer about 2,800 programs. Our government recognizes that private career colleges fill an important niche in our education system. They provide a wide variety of training to students who appreciate learning practical skills on a flexible schedule from an institution close to where they live. The focused training they offer allows rapid entry or re-entry into the workforce.

The new Private Career Colleges Act was proclaimed September 18, 2006. It will ensure that all students enrolled in private career colleges get the education and training they were promised and expected. The new act replaces 30-year-old legislation that needed to be updated to reflect our concerns for quality, accountability and student protection. The four key aspects to the act are: mandatory registration, improved student protection, quality improvement, and special measures for international students.

Beginning today, new private career colleges that wish to offer training in our province must register themselves as a PCC, and the programs they offer must also be registered. This registration requirement will support improved quality for all students and protect the overwhelming majority of private career colleges that do an excellent job from the actions of a few.

Students will also be protected through the training completion assurance fund, which will provide either further training or refunds if a school closes suddenly. It will be funded by the private career college sector and administered by the government. All registered private

career colleges must be members of the fund. It will build up over the next two years and assume liability starting in January 2009.

The third element of the new legislation requires that training programs offered by private career colleges meet new government-approved standards. We are creating a credentials framework, program standards and performance indicators which will set standard requirements for certificates, diplomas and other credentials.

Finally, to better protect international students, the colleges will be limited to collecting no more than 25% of the cost of a program before students begin. The act also requires certain schools to hold fees paid by international students in a trust account.

There are a variety of other protections. The key part is that the proclamation of the Private Career Colleges Act is only the first step as we continue to work with the sector to implement these regulations and measures. We are determined to ensure high-quality, accountable programs at our private career colleges, and those will help us meet the goal of building the best workforce in North America to support Ontario's competitive edge in today's knowledge economy.

DRINKING AND DRIVING

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Transportation): I would like to acknowledge and thank the member from Cambridge for bringing forward the wearing of the red ribbon.

I rise in the House today to report progress on curbing one of the biggest dangers on Ontario's roads: drunk drivers. The McGuinty government has made progress, along with our safety partners, in preventing drunk driving deaths on Ontario roads.

This morning I was pleased to help Mothers Against Drunk Driving Canada launch its annual Project Red Ribbon campaign. MADD Canada is distributing four million red ribbons of the type that I'm wearing right across the country this holiday season. The red ribbon is a sign of respect for the thousands of people who have lost their lives or who have been injured as a result of impaired driving. By tying it on your vehicle, you signify a commitment not to drink and drive, and it serves also as a reminder to others. A red ribbon on your key chain is also a good reminder to yourself.

I would like to acknowledge the great work that MADD does to educate people and to prevent impaired driving. Public education, public awareness and tough penalties are the key to saving lives. Ontario has some of the toughest anti-drinking-and-driving laws in North America. They include stiff fines, licence suspensions, mandatory remedial measures and an ignition interlock program. Drunk driving conviction can cost more than \$20,000 in fines, insurance and legal fees.

In its 2006 report, MADD has given Ontario high marks for our impaired driving laws and enforcement. And I'm proud to report the latest statistics show that the number of fatalities involving a drunk driver has fallen in

Ontario by more than 11% in 2004 compared to the year before, 2003. This shows that our tough laws and public education efforts such as the red ribbon campaign are working. The latest statistics show Ontario has the safest roads in North America for the second year in a row, and we have the lowest rate of alcohol-related road deaths in Canada.

But the simple fact is that drunk driving costs too many lives, too many times. Even one life is one too many. Drinking and driving is still a factor in about one quarter of all fatal collisions in Ontario. That is why we have tough laws to stop people from drinking and driving, and that's why our government is working with MADD Canada and other organizations and groups to educate the public and raise awareness.

I'm looking forward to our continued partnership with MADD and with police services right across this province to counter impaired driving. I ask all members to join me and "Tie one on for safety." We must all urge everyone not to drink and drive this holiday season, and we should not drink and drive all year round.

1410

ENVIRONMENT INDUSTRY

INDUSTRIES DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): Today is Environment Industry Day at Queen's Park, and it's a prime opportunity for each of us in this House to get up to speed about this rapidly growing sector in Ontario and to meet with some of the dynamic men and women who are leading its growth.

As Minister of the Environment, I am a steward of the environment for the people of Ontario. My job is to protect our air, our land and our water. I'm also proud to be part of a government that is committed to leaving a cleaner, greener Ontario to our children.

Ontario's environment industry is helping us realize that vision. It is striking to note that close to half of all the environmental businesses in Canada, as many as 2,400 companies, are based right here in Ontario: companies like Waterloo Biofilter Systems, a leading supplier of residential and commercial-scale waste water treatment; and Feel Good Cars, which is developing low-speed, zero-emission electric cars.

Clearly, there is a growing demand for products and services that sustain and protect our environment here at home and around the world. The people and businesses that make up Ontario's environment industry are helping to answer that demand. They are contributing to our province's growth and future prosperity by generating close to \$7 billion a year in revenue and by employing 62,000 highly skilled and well-educated Ontarians. We only have to look at Ontario's environmental leaders—companies like Teknion, Steelcase, Cargill, Rohm and Haas, and institutions like the Trillium Health Centre—to see how environmental performance is inevitably linked to excellence. They prove that going beyond environ-

mental regulatory compliance can boost an organization's results.

Notre gouvernement compte sur l'innovation et les qualités entrepreneuriales du secteur de l'environnement pour aider l'Ontario à réaliser le programme ambitieux de protection de l'environnement. Nous encourageons une culture d'innovation au gouvernement et nous appuyons des solutions créatives de la part des entreprises, des établissements et des particuliers. De plus, nous investissons dans nos gens, la ressource la plus importante de l'Ontario.

Our government counts on the innovation and entrepreneurial skills of our environmental sector to help achieve Ontario's ambitious environmental agenda. We are fostering a culture of innovation within government and supporting creative solutions by businesses, institutions and individuals alike. We are also investing in our people, Ontario's most important resource.

This is Take Our Kids to Work Day. It's a great opportunity to inspire our grade 9 students to reach higher and follow their own dreams for success, because they are our future innovators and entrepreneurs who will bring new environmental solutions to the world.

This government is passionate about supporting Ontario's students, our best and our brightest, and I want to congratulate all of the Ontario Sci-tech Award winners, who brought home a total of 185 awards at this year's Canada Wide Science Fair. Clearly, Ontario is a training ground for the scientists, researchers and leaders of tomorrow. They are the future success of Ontario's environment industry.

Each year, the Ontario Environment Industry Association, ONEIA, partners with us in organizing this day. I would like to recognize Alex Gill, the executive director of the Ontario Environment Industry Association, and Jane Pagel, who chaired this year's Environment Industry Day committee.

Speaker, a strong and vital environment industry in Ontario is helping us build a greener, healthier and more prosperous future for our children and all of our communities. That's the kind of future we all want to see.

WORKPLACE SAFETY FOR STUDENTS

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): I'm very pleased to rise today to take this opportunity to address the Legislature on Take Our Kids to Work Day. Let's all give a very warm Queen's Park welcome to all the children who are visiting Queen's Park today with their family members. I hope they have enjoyed themselves so far, because this is an extremely important day for Ontario students, but more, for all students in Canada.

Today, thousands of young people are seeing firsthand what it means to go to work, and it's up to us as employers, labour organizations, parents, teachers and government to get the message out to students about being safe at work. Let's start these young people off on the right foot by talking to them about health and safety in the workplace.

To ensure the safety of our students and young workers, a comprehensive health and safety orientation should be provided when they first enter the workplace. A comprehensive health and safety orientation should include a tour of the workplace, an overview of potential hazards, emergency procedures, workplace safety rules, first aid provisions, and all other important health and safety facts.

We have to encourage students and young workers to ask questions when they start a new job. We have to make sure that they know there is no such thing as a stupid question when it comes to workplace safety. And we have to make sure that young people understand and know that they have the right to say no to unsafe work.

I want to state emphatically that young worker health and safety is a priority for this government. We are protecting our future by ensuring that our youth work in the healthiest and safest environments. We are actively raising awareness about workplace health and safety among students and young workers. We are making sure that Ministry of Labour inspectors pay special attention to orientation, training and supervision given to new and young workers. I'm proud to say that as a result of our efforts, Ontario now leads the country in improving workplace safety for young people.

Here are just a few of the ministry's initiatives that provide crucial information to our young workers: making health and safety mandatory in the high school curriculum; providing the Live Safe! Work Smart! Program to teachers to impart to their students the knowledge they need to approach work with a safety-first attitude; making information on occupational health and safety and employment standards rights more accessible to young workers and their parents through our WorkSmartOntario website; and revising our employment standards poster to include a reference directing young workers to the new young workers' portal on the ministry website.

I should note that this change was inspired by students who participated in the CBC's Making the Grade project last spring, students just like those who are here today.

In July, I established the minister's action group on vulnerable workers under the age of 25, whose goal is to find new and innovative approaches to reduce workplace injuries and deaths in this hard-to-reach age group. But there is more to be done. This government is on the side of working families, making sure their sons and daughters return home from work safely every day. By working together, though, in a non-partisan way, every one of us needs to make sure that we get the message out to ensure that our youth stay safe at work. It's up to every one of us in this room to create a generation of young workers that places a priority on safety.

I'd like to welcome some young workers from the Ministry of Labour who are here with family members today: Andrew and Bradley Carty and Danielle Safaty. We are pleased that they're with us. But most importantly, we need to make sure not just on this day but every day that they work safe, and that we do our part to ensure that they have a safe and healthy work environment.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Responses?

PRIVATE CAREER COLLEGES

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): I'm just responding to the private career college announcement by the minister today. It's not really an announcement. We passed the bill in this House last December. It's the first time I've seen anybody get up here, and just because the regs are coming in—11 months later it takes you to write fairly simple regs to help protect the 38,000 students in our private career colleges, in some 520 colleges across the province, and particularly international students. We all agreed in December that this was a good idea, that people shouldn't be ripped off by some operators who have been unscrupulous, but I want to say that most career colleges do a good job and do fill a niche.

Mind you, you're protecting them while they're at college but you're not doing much for them in terms of making sure they have a job when they leave college: 27,000 job losses in the auto parts sector in September alone this year. That's just one sector and one month. In October, and the numbers are still coming in, there have been over 1,000 jobs lost. Since you and your government came to office, Minister, 113,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost, over the last three years.

Where is the comprehensive plan? In the same month that this bill was passed, December 2005, this House unanimously passed a motion in the name of John Tory for your government to come up with a jobs plan and an economic plan to make sure these young people have jobs when they leave career college. Where is that? So far, the finance minister refuses to do it. The Premier refuses to put together a plan. I was hoping maybe you'd spend your two minutes today in telling us how you're actually going to create some jobs in this province.

1420

DRINKING AND DRIVING

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I'm also pleased to respond on behalf of the opposition party in respect to the work that needs to be done, and has been done, on Mothers Against Drunk Driving. I commend them for the work they've done. Every time this year that I hear anything on MADD, I think of Constable Terry Ryan, who was killed by a drunk driver a couple of years ago, and I think of his wife, Carol; I think of the Durham chapter of MADD Canada and the great work that MADD Canada has done. So all of us will pay close attention this Saturday, and all through the year, when it's best to take the advice of MADD Canada: Drive safely, drive sober and arrive alive.

ENVIRONMENT INDUSTRY

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I'm pleased to respond to the Minister of the Environment's statement today. On behalf of John Tory and the PC caucus, I would like to welcome all our guests from the

Ontario Environment Industry Association who have come to the Legislature for the seventh annual Environment Industry Day.

I and other members of our caucus had the opportunity to meet with some very forward-thinking representatives from ONEIA today who are aggressively pursuing avenues to promote environmentally friendly solutions to the challenges we face today. They realize that a healthy environment and a growing economy are entirely compatible. They also realize that this minister and this Premier refuse to move forward and have the courage to make the types of decisions that good leaders make.

We all know this government loves to take credit for things it didn't do, such as Minister Gerretsen's ridiculous suggestion last week that they are the first government to ever seriously take on brownfields. It might be that he was in a state of amnesia or it was simple contempt, but I will take this time to point out that the Brownfields Statute Law Amendment Act was passed in 2001—

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The member alleged contempt against a member of this Legislature. You can't do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I didn't hear it—the way you heard it, anyway.

Ms. Scott: The Brownfields Statute Law Amendment Act was passed in 2001, and shortly after that, direction was given to the ministry experts to start the work on regulations. And—no surprise—the McGuinty Liberals are once again saying anything to get elected even if it means being inaccurate with the facts.

I also wonder if the member from Perth-Middlesex had enough courage to join the Minister of the Environment today and present our good friends from ONEIA with the amazing plan he said that they have. Once again, one broken promise is as good as another in Dalton McGuinty's government.

WORKPLACE SAFETY FOR STUDENTS

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): On behalf of John Tory and the PC caucus, I'm pleased to speak to the Take Our Kids to Work program initiated by the Learning Partnership.

What a great opportunity, to have hundreds of thousands of grade 9 students experience a wide variety of jobs and career opportunities across Canada. Further information for this great program can be obtained at www.takeourkidstowork.ca or www.thelearningpartnership.ca.

I'm sure that this program has the support of all members of our Legislature.

DRINKING AND DRIVING

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto-Danforth): Very briefly, first I want to add my voice to those who congratulate Mothers Against Drunk Driving for their very

effective advocacy in this society to save lives. We all owe them a debt.

ENVIRONMENT INDUSTRY

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto-Danforth): I also want to speak to the statement made by the Minister of the Environment about environmental industries in this province. We know that environmental industries in this province have an important role to play. They are quite important in helping us all reach our goal of sustainable development. But that goal is not supported by this government. It's incredible that Ontario does not have a toxic use reduction act that would make pollution prevention plans mandatory and require companies to reduce their use and emissions of toxic chemicals.

Some other more progressive jurisdictions like Massachusetts are doing this. They set high standards that drive innovation, and we need to keep that bar moving to create the space for Ontario's environmental industries to prosper and to grow and to make Ontario a powerhouse in the global economy, where sustainable solutions and technologies will drive prosperity.

I'm not the only person who is advocating such a course of action. The Industrial Pollution Action Team, an eight-member team convened by former Minister of the Environment Leona Dombrowsky, in its final report to the government recommended implementing regulatory requirements for pollution prevention. In concert with required pollution prevention, this expert panel also called for the government to provide incentives to prompt a shift towards cutting pollution at the source. Low-interest loans and grants for introducing protective pollution prevention approaches are not available in Ontario.

The panel reported on hearing evidence from industry that expressed frustration about existing economic incentive programs which are almost entirely geared to granting exemptions for what is called the bolt-on, end-of-the-pipe pollution control technology, without similar exemptions for more protective pollution prevention approaches.

Currently, in Liberal fashion, a small measure has been proposed in the category of incentives through the environmental leaders program. More cosmetic than substantive in nature, which seems to be pretty common, companies that take initiative to go beyond compliance levels receive recognition on a website and preferred customer status at the approvals branch.

It's readily apparent that there's talent here in Ontario to develop and deliver pollution prevention and actually make a substantial difference. The incentives have to be in place, but lack of action on the part of this government shows that it's continuing to neglect its obligations to Ontario and the environment.

PRIVATE CAREER COLLEGES

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): With all the horror stories we've heard with the private career colleges, any news to regulate this industry is not only

welcome but critical. I want to add, with all due respect to the for-profit educational institutions, New Democrats are committed to publicly funded, affordable, accessible colleges.

Further, I say to the Liberals, they should commit themselves to the following: Reduce student debt, freeze and lower tuition fees. We have the largest student-faculty ratio in the country. It's one of the wealthiest provinces. Liberals must provide funding to hire more full-time professors rather than part-time professors at the college and university level. I say hire more teacher librarians—more academic libraries that are well staffed. That's what people are looking for in our colleges and universities. By doing this, more and more of our students will find our public system much more attractive.

WORKPLACE SAFETY FOR STUDENTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): It's Take Our Kids to Work Day, and I'm proud to have my son Julian Leonetti and his friend Brendan Angles here. I agree with the minister that the theme of safety first is extremely important. He will know that Bill 95 was put together by the kids from Oakville, Aurora and Ottawa, who have some really good suggestions about how to improve safety in the workplace.

We know that this is a situation in Ontario where we have 130,000 or more parents who can't bring their kids to work today because they've lost their jobs under the McGuinty Liberals' watch. This is an office environment, so the children who are here are learning about this environment, and yes, there are health and safety challenges even in office environments. In this particular environment, it's usually bumping into somebody's inflated ego or being knocked over by a lot of hot wind. Nonetheless, in all seriousness, I welcome all the young people who are here today and say that health and safety is extremely important. Some of them who are here today in the galleries may be taking these seats in the future.

WOMAN ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I believe we have unanimous consent for all parties to speak for up to five minutes regarding Woman Abuse Prevention Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Bradley has asked for unanimous consent for all parties to speak for up to five minutes regarding Woman Abuse Prevention Month. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues): Today is the first day of Ontario's annual Woman Abuse Prevention Month. During November, it's our collective responsibility to raise awareness of the prevalence of woman abuse in our society. We must also reinforce the need for all of us to join together to prevent it.

Too many women are living in fear. Twenty-five per cent of Ontario women experience abuse by a partner at some point in their lifetime, and abuse takes a horrible toll. It diminishes self-esteem, it undermines health, it takes away a sense of security, and it limits the ability to be involved in community and society. Woman abuse violates basic human dignity and rights. In a healthy society this can't be tolerated, and in Ontario it won't be tolerated. Our government is proud to join together with all of the women and men of Ontario who are working to put an end to woman abuse.

1430

Two years ago, I joined the Premier in introducing our government's four-year, \$68-million domestic violence action plan. Over the past two years, we have made real progress in implementing this plan. We have recently sent out our report card to all of our constituency groups who are actively following how we're doing in implementing our plan. We have mobilized individuals and organizations across Ontario to strengthen community-based supports to serve victims. We have launched a campaign to help concerned neighbours, friends and families recognize the signs of abuse and know how to respond. Health professionals, justice and community service providers are being trained to be able to intervene earlier and offer abused women the support they need. And we're working with the justice sector to better protect and support women and their children by holding abusers accountable for violent behaviour.

We have made important progress, but we know there is more work that needs to be done. That's why, later this month, our government will launch an important public education campaign targeted to children and youth and the adults who influence them. Our goal is to set patterns of positive behaviour and attitudes between girls and boys early so that violence is not perpetuated generation after generation. In the coming weeks, we will also be launching a new program designed to help victims of domestic violence achieve greater economic independence through job training.

In recent years, we have learned of numerous tragic cases of violence reported against children and women. Many more incidents occur behind closed doors and are never made public. Woman abuse is a terrible reality, and as a society we all share the responsibility to prevent its occurrence and to work for the protection and safety of women and their children. All of us in this House have a role to play, not just as role models but to influence other adults, who also need to show how their children should be behaving with one another.

Woman Abuse Prevention Month is an opportunity for all Ontarians to get involved and take action to make our homes and communities safer for women and their children. It is an opportunity to recognize that as long as even one woman lives with fear of abuse, our work is not yet done.

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): I'm pleased to participate today on behalf of John Tory and the PC caucus. I join with all members of this House as we mark Woman Abuse Prevention Month in Ontario. Our prov-

ince is full of many fine agencies that assist abused spouses, and we must always give them our full support.

I believe the most important concept in what we mark this month is prevention, and that is what I want to concentrate on in my remarks today. We all know that many abusers were abused as children, that the traumas they suffered as children lead to them becoming abusers as adults. Adult victims of abuse are also more likely to have been abused as children.

In my riding, there is a fine organization called YRAP, the York Region Abuse Program, which helps children, adolescents and adults who were sexually abused as children. I am told that one in three girls and one in four boys have been abused. This means that if you go into any classroom in Ontario, one in three of the girls and one in four of the boys you see in front of you have been abused. This is truly a shocking statistic.

Children also face threats because of child pornography and the Internet. Abuse can now be inspired and significantly expanded by the new technologies that are growing in our society. Violence, sexual exploitation and discrimination in video games, in films and on television can have a strong effect on children, but the main threat to them is abuse—in many cases from people they know and should be able to trust.

We must break the chain of abuse at an early age. To truly protect women from abuse, we need to stop children from growing up to be abusers. Abused girls are also more likely to become victims of assault as adults. Women with a history of sexual abuse as children or teens are three times as likely to experience domestic violence at the hands of a partner or spouse.

YRAP and many other organizations work directly with children who have been abused. They work to heal them as children or when they have grown up to be adolescents or adults. They know that healing is vital. The York Region Abuse Program runs programs in our local schools with both boards and at both the elementary and secondary levels. They know from research that it is peer influence that will have the most effect on the children viewing. They have four separate programs that are divided, to be age appropriate, from kindergarten to secondary school.

One of the results of the program, YRAP finds, is that in school every time is disclosure. This means that students come up to YRAP participants after the program to say that they have been abused. YRAP told me that this happens almost every time they come to teach kids in schools how to avoid abuse. It is a tragic story, yet it indicates the depth of the problem of abuse and the value of programs in showing kids that they can get help.

We must heal abused kids and abused adults, both for themselves and to ensure that they do not become abusers. If we can break this chain of abuse one time, we can break it forever. A child who is never abused is unlikely to ever be an abuser, and a child or adult who has been healed is less likely to be an abuser. Prevention needs to be done at the earliest age possible, and it needs to be done one person at a time.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): Recent research indicates that violence against women by live-in spouses or partners is a global problem, not just an Ontario problem. New research from the World Health Organization is extremely disturbing. Researchers interviewed nearly 25,000 women at 15 sites in 10 countries. At six sites, more than half of women interviewed said they had been subjected to moderate or severe violence in the home at some point. At 13 sites, a full one quarter said they had suffered such violence in the past year.

No area is immune, but violence in rural areas is particularly acute. Activists in the women's movement have long known of the injury, trauma and abuse of women caused by violence in the home at the hands of spouses, partners and boyfriends. But this latest study puts hard numbers on the horrific reality. It confirms that violence against women is a global epidemic, although it is rarely reported and is often hidden. Depending on the country in this particular study, from one fifth to two thirds of women interviewed said they had never even disclosed their abuse before.

This compelling research cannot be dismissed and should not be ignored. Just weeks ago during the Bill 89 debate, we were riveted, and at the same time repelled, by the testimony of violence perpetrated against the mothers of Jared Osidacz and Kevin Latimer. We were jarred by the fact that those abused women and their children did not have the supports and protection they deserved and desperately needed. When will society finally make the eradication of violence against women a priority?

We see from Alberta what can be done. They have quite a unique program for helping women and children to flee violence that is comprehensive and spares no resource in ensuring that they are finally secure and able to leave. It's not good enough to encourage women to seek help; we need to do more to facilitate a woman leaving a violent home. We need accessible, affordable housing and child care, resettlement funds, and meaningful employment that enables her to support her children upon leaving the home. Women from marginalized, racialized or remote communities, immigrant women, aboriginal women, and women with disabilities and language barriers need to know clearly that they too will not be left behind and that there is a lifeline for them.

Women's groups, led by the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses and the Ontario Federation of Labour, will in fact be rallying tomorrow here at Queen's Park. The Canadian Auto Workers Union and the Ontario Federation of Labour have already begun laying plans for their December 6 memorial to the women who were massacred at École Polytechnique in Montreal. There's a massive mobilization under way already already by these organizations to underscore three key messages to government: (1) Increase, don't decrease, funding; (2) It needs to be core funding, not project funding; and (3) Funding to groups which advocate for women and push for government action to improve the lives of women in this country is essential.

1440

It is tremendous that the power of women is driving this issue slowly forward, but sad in this day and age that we still must plan events to highlight the tragedy of woman abuse. By now, we should be well on our way to celebrating an end to violence rather than condemning its perpetuation.

Women will tell you there are 10 steps to ending violence against women. They are:

- (1) Understand that violence against women is an equality rights issue.
- (2) Recognize that male power is upheld by rape and sexual harassment.
- (3) Stop racism and oppression and make Ontario accessible.
- (4) End poverty now.
- (5) Create and maintain housing, not-for-profit child care and employment training.
- (6) Provide fair access to justice for women.
- (7) Hold violent men accountable for their actions.
- (8) Stop criminalizing and psychiatrizing women.
- (9) Demand secure funding for women's organizations.
- (10) Listen to survivors and women's advocates. They, in fact, are the experts.

I'd like to add a couple of points of my own:

We have a bill before the Legislature, Bill 45, aimed at ending violence in the workplace. It's been embraced by many groups. The idea is that sexual harassment, any kind of harassment, in the workplace becomes something that can be noted as a health and safety violation, and the employer is responsible to make sure that those violations are addressed like any other workplace hazard.

Another one would be supporting the resolution I just sent to the Clerk, as follows: "That, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should urge the federal government to restore the \$5-million (40%) cut to Status of Women Canada..., which is a vital government agency for women's rights, opportunity and equality."

ORAL QUESTIONS

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, the Premier correctly pointed out that this Legislature has passed two resolutions, supported by all political parties, which spoke to the need for a new deal for Ontario. The Premier also pointed out that the Prime Minister said before, during and after the election that he would address these matters of federal-provincial finances, which of course go beyond Ontario alone. I think it's also fair to say that Mr. Harper has said a number of times that some of these things would be dealt with in the 2007 budget next spring.

As the temperature gets turned up and up, it seems that all of us, on behalf of all of the very same taxpayers we all serve, are accomplishing less and less. My question is this: Is the Premier, who has the support, in principle, of all parties on a new deal, willing to consider turning down the temperature, lowering the level of the rhetoric and seeing if we can't try a bit harder to address these issues in a manner that has worked well for Ontario and for Canada in the past, even when different parties formed the two governments? Are you willing to consider that?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I'm more than prepared to adopt any approach, pursue any strategy, that brings about good results for the people of Ontario. But I can say, and I offer this in all sincerity to my friend opposite, that my modest experience in dealing with two federal governments now has led me to understand that there are no real good politics to be had in Ottawa to be seen to be supportive of the Ontario cause anywhere across this country. That's just a political reality.

So what I will continue to do is to press our case before the federal government. We'll be aggressive when it is called for. We are more than prepared to meet on occasion, and we look forward to having our meetings received, but at the end of the day we will do what we think is important and necessary to advance the Ontario case on behalf of the people of Ontario.

Mr. Tory: To the Premier again: I think history would suggest otherwise in terms of the ability of the governments to get along.

As the leader of the NDP said yesterday, this is not about us. It's about people who are out there waiting for affordable housing. It's about First Nations and other residents of Caledonia who are waiting to see progress. It's about people in Toronto who would maybe like to see a world's fair done on a prudent basis. Yet, on the housing, the McGuinty government has \$400 million in an account which is not being spent because governments are squabbling, but the people wait for the housing. People from all corners in Caledonia just wait for some progress, and see a jousting match instead. And the Expo bid expires because nobody can look beyond the short-term squabbles and try to find an acceptable resolution.

My question is this: The Premier was in professional life. I know that in my business life, when I was helping to try to rebuild the CFL and so on, I didn't publicly condemn the people I was trying to do business with and make progress with. It just doesn't work that way anywhere else outside of politics. What does the Premier intend to do to try to get more results since we are not doing well so far?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: We've enjoyed a number of successes, both with this federal government and the former federal government. I will draw my colleague's attention to the Canada-Ontario agreement, which we hope Prime Minister Harper will in fact honour, as he said he would. That will bring substantial support to the people of Ontario, whether you are talking about their

health care, their education, support for retraining opportunities, support for a cleaner and safer environment and the like. So we have in fact scored some successes, but my focus remains on those issues that remain outstanding.

I know the leader of the official opposition does not believe that it is fair for Ontarians to receive \$86 less for their health care and their education than do Canadians elsewhere. I know he does not believe that it's appropriate for us to receive about \$1.2 billion less for our infrastructure than we would were we Canadians in the other provinces. I know he doesn't believe that it's fair for our unemployed to receive \$3,600 less than Canadians unemployed in the other provinces. So we will continue to move forward on all those issues and press our case firmly.

Mr. Tory: I would just like to share some quotes: "I know one thing for absolutely certain is that the finger pointing and the blame game has got us nowhere. I guess it's made a political point in the short term, but it hasn't helped the people of Ontario."

Then, "We've got personality clashes getting in the way of meeting the needs of the people of Ontario."

And then, "We've got a childish, scary contest going on between the provincial and federal governments to see who's going to blink first and hospitals and Ontario patients are getting caught in the crossfire."

Those quotes were words spoken by you, by the Premier of Ontario, Dalton McGuinty, when he was not the Premier, when he was on this side of the House. My question is this: What has changed from the days when the Premier spoke those words to today? I think he was right then and those words apply today. I'm asking, are you going to take a look at whether we can try to make those words a reality and get some results on the very subject you talk about for the people of Ontario?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I think the leader of the official opposition is concerned about the comfort level of the federal government. That's not my concern. My concern is with the comfort level of the people of Ontario. Whether it's their health care, their education, their environment, their employment opportunities, their retraining opportunities, that is my focus.

From time to time, yes, this is a bit of a rough sport, and I've come to understand that after 16 years, and from time to time, you've got to pick a spot and you've got to pick a side. We've decided to side with the people of Ontario. We've decided it's unfair for them not to get the same amount for their unemployment insurance, not to get the same amount for their health care and not to get the same amount for their infrastructure. So my focus is not to ensure that we have a cordial dialogue with the federal government so much as to ensure that the federal government understands that we have on this side of the House champions for the people of Ontario.

YOUTH CRIME

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. I would say to you, where

you make your mistake is that this is not a sport. This is about achieving results for the people of Ontario on housing and on Caledonia and on transit and on those things, and so far you have been spectacularly unsuccessful in doing that with your present approach.

My question is about the greater Toronto area youth crime statistics that are on the rise. According to a Toronto Star article, "Youths in the 905 regions around Toronto are being arrested by police in record numbers for drug crimes, assaults and weapons offences." Fifteen years of crime data show huge jumps in the percentage involved: from 1991 to 2005, drug crimes in Durham, 7% to 29%; Halton, 10% to 35%; Peel, 4% to 17%. We are hearing that what is needed by police experts and others is a comprehensive approach to keeping kids from getting involved in crime in the first place. We've seen lots of announcements but no comprehensive plan for young people in this province. When are we going to see one?

1450

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): The fact of the matter is, and I think by any objective assessment, we are bringing in a comprehensive approach to dealing not only with crime itself but the very causes of crime. We are proud to be providing additional funding to our school boards so that our schools are available in the afternoons and evenings and on weekends to our young people. We're proud to help fund our youth challenge fund, which has the potential of going to \$45 million. That is a demonstration of our faith in the community. That is not a program that is run by the government of Ontario; it's a demonstration of our faith in the community. Beyond that, we are funding faith-based groups who came to us and said, "Can we not have an opportunity to embrace this cause and to do something for ourselves vis-à-vis our own youth?" So we've also funded that particular program.

I'm delighted to speak at length about the other things, but I can say, in all objectivity, that we are in fact bringing a comprehensive approach to dealing with the demands to address youth crime.

Mr. Tory: I think the government regularly fools itself about schools, for example. Just to pick one example, I was in the Chesterlea neighbourhood in Scarborough this past summer, and the school there was padlocked tight as a drum because the government can't work together with the school boards to actually get those schools open.

It's interesting that the Premier mentions the youth challenge fund. Since last February, this has been announced and reannounced, by our count, seven times. During the eight months of seven announcements, no money flowed; no money has flowed as of today. Now, we've had some applications received, and a small bit of the money is going to go out next month. But given this government's track record when it comes to keeping or not keeping promises, it's a worry as to whether any of that money is actually going to get to the kids and families that need it.

Can the Premier tell us when we're going to see some real progress and what the timelines are for that project you referred to to actually get up and running and really making a big difference for thousands of families instead of a handful?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Let me speak to the issue of this youth challenge fund and the leadership role being taken on by Coach Mike "Pinball" Clemons. That is a wonderful enterprise. It is without precedent in this province and perhaps in this country. One of the things we have found by looking at successful proposals in other parts of the world is that, in many cases, those have been driven from the bottom up. So Coach Clemons has decided to take this on.

It's taking a little bit longer, frankly, than I would have liked, but I think the leader of the official opposition well knows that we have decided not to insinuate ourselves into that process. We've decided not to impose artificial time constraints or dates or deadlines on Coach Clemons's work. We've told him, "Here's the money. Grab the best people that can you with respect to this. Make sure you're getting some solid proposals, and then roll those out the door." That's where we are at this point in time. I think he's doing fabulous work, and I'd encourage all Ontarians to support him in that regard.

Mr. Tory: There is another concern that exists with respect to this program or perhaps how narrowly it's focused, and that is that it is focused—and quite properly, in terms of one of the real challenges that exist—on the 13 so-called challenged neighbourhoods in Toronto, but it doesn't go beyond that. Some of the statistics I outlined earlier on indicate that there's a serious problem with respect to young people getting involved in crime and not being prevented from getting involved in crime in other areas, both in the GTA and beyond. We have London and Hamilton, for example, where we're seeing increasing incidents. Hamilton police chief Brian Mullan asked last spring, "What about those young people living in communities like Hamilton who are also at risk?"

We've put forward a number of recommendations in this regard with respect to things that might be done on a province-wide basis. Obviously, there's a more acute problem in some parts of Toronto, but now that a call for a comprehensive program is in the headlines, this means not just comprehensive in terms of the range of issues it covers but the entire province. When are we going to see some initiative to help the Hamiltons and the Londons with the challenge they face with programs that will help those kids and families to stay out of criminal activity?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I know the leader of the official opposition knows that, overall, the number of homicides and gun-related homicides are down this year; I know he knows that. I think he's also aware of our summer jobs for youth program, which employed 900 young people in the Toronto community this year. I think he also is aware that we are expanding that to, I believe, at least five other communities next year.

Beyond that, we also have a number of other initiatives that we have put in place: a youth and policing in-

itiative, the school-based prevention/diversion program, the youth outreach worker program, the youthconnect.ca website and the Ministry of Government Services Ontario public service learn and work program. These are a host of programs that we have initiated, that we're putting together.

It's great to cite programs, but let me tell you what this is all about. We are absolutely committed to ensuring that young people have every possible opportunity to achieve their potential. We understand that some young people are growing up in disadvantaged circumstances and need a special hand. We're more than willing to lend that hand. That's why we have those programs under way.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is to the Premier. Only a few years ago, you criticized the former Conservative government for running TV ads attacking the federal government. At the time, you called them "wasteful, taxpayer-funded, partisan political advertising," and "political one-upmanship." Today, we learn that the McGuinty government is getting ready to waste public money on your fed-bashing ad campaign, featuring TV and print ads, no doubt prepared by Liberal-friendly ad firms like Bensimon Byrne.

If this kind of ad campaign was, according to you, "wasteful, taxpayer-funded, partisan political advertising" when the former government did it, then isn't it equally wasteful and partisan political advertising for you to do it now?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): Of course, I appreciate the question, but the leader of the NDP hasn't even seen the ads yet and he's already drawn his conclusion about the darned things. He also is aware that there are a couple of safeguards in place that ensure that the public interest is protected.

First of all, the selection process for those who do advertising is something that is independent of government. The second thing the leader of the NDP knows is that we now have a process in place that requires that all proposed ads have to be vetted by our Provincial Auditor.

I know that's something the official opposition did not support, because I guess they thought it would get in the way of their old practices, but we happen to have faith in the system, we happen to have faith in the Provincial Auditor in these matters and we'll continue to do so.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, just a few years ago, you said that the people of Ontario are "united in their disgust at the display of attack ads," "I don't know anybody who supports that," and that this is "flushing ... taxpayer dollars down the advertising toilet." Today there are a lot of working families in this province who are struggling. They need the help of your government. They don't need to see millions of dollars of public money flushed down the TV advertisement toilet by the McGuinty government. I ask you, how can you justify wasting tax-

payers' money on something you yourself condemned as "partisan political advertising"?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, the leader of the NDP is talking about an ad that is not running and doesn't exist. If we did any advertising, it would have to be approved. I know the leader of the NDP understands that.

But here's the real issue: We believe that the federal government should honour the Canada-Ontario agreement, which would provide our unemployed workers with \$314 million more for training; we think that the federal government should be addressing the unfairness that exists at present, whereby Ontarians get \$86 less for their health care and their education; we think that the federal government should be honouring its commitment to address the inequity that relates to infrastructure, which is costing us about \$1.1 billion a year.

Those are the fundamental issues and, yes, we will continue to work to ensure that Ontarians understand how important those issues are to them.

Mr. Hampton: This is what people across Ontario see: the McGuinty government that can't keep its own promises and can't run on its own record in an election campaign, and that engages in the tired, old politics of blame and squabble. Premier, if you want to run that kind of game, then would you at least do it on your own dime? Have the Liberal Party pay for that kind of partisan political advertising.

The reality for people is that all kinds of needs are being unmet out there. They see millions of dollars being wasted on TV advertising attacking the federal government. My question is, why not stop wasting the money, stop wasting millions of dollars on this kind of television advertising and spend it on the services that the people of Ontario need?

1500

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I'm going to have to say this again: There is no such ad. I'm not sure where the leader of the NDP—if he's seen a particular ad that's attacking the federal government to do with the fiscal imbalance, it's not ours, so I don't know what he's talking about.

If there were to be such an ad, of course that would have to be approved. If there were such an ad, it would only serve to reinforce the case that we've been making on an ongoing basis vis-à-vis the federal government. What we're talking about there is ensuring that we're treated fairly. We're not looking for a special deal from the federal government, we're not looking for extraordinary support; we're simply looking for the same kind of transfer payments that are made to the other provinces when it comes to our health care, our education, our training support and our infrastructure. That's all we're looking for, just a fair deal for Ontarians.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): To the Premier: While your government bickers and squabbles with the federal government, ordinary people across Ontario are struggling—people like the children of

Cat Lake First Nation. Their school burned down this September, destroying the school water purifier. So now the schoolchildren do not have access to safe, clean drinking water. The Minister of the Environment says that everyone in Ontario has a fundamental right to safe, clean drinking water.

My question is this: How can the McGuinty government waste millions more public money on television ads when children at the Cat Lake First Nation school have to do without safe, clean drinking water?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I know the leader of the NDP will be interested in learning that one of the three subjects on the agenda for yesterday's supposed meeting was the quality of drinking water on our reserves. That's something the minister responsible for aboriginal affairs feels very passionately about.

I know the leader of the NDP also understands that the federal government has exclusive jurisdiction over reserves, including the quality of the drinking water. I also know that he's aware that our Minister of the Environment has offered on a number of occasions to provide whatever expertise and support we might lend to our First Nations communities on the reserves and to offer that, again, to the federal government. But we must respect the ultimate jurisdiction and responsibility of the federal government and we're more than prepared to work with them in this regard.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, historically in Ontario, former Ontario governments recognized that the situation in First Nations was so desperate in terms of safe, clean drinking water that they stepped up to the plate and did something. They didn't squabble and bicker with Ottawa, they didn't use First Nations children as partisan ping-pong balls in a battle with the federal government; they did something.

Here's the situation, Premier: This community is so desperate that they're raiding the school breakfast program budget in order to be able to purchase bottles of safe, clean drinking water. My question to you is, when are you going to stop the bickering, the squabbling with the federal government? When are you going to stop wasting public money on your TV ads and do something meaningful like just provide safe, clean drinking water for these First Nations children in Cat Lake First Nation?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the minister responsible for aboriginal affairs.

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): The leader of the third party continues to bring up this point in this Legislature, though it should be brought up in the House of Commons, but I welcome the opportunity to address it. As the member knows, there is a prescribed set of roles and responsibilities set out in the Constitution of this country that places the full responsibility of infrastructure, including clean, safe drinking water, to the federal government for our First Nation communities right across this country. That was one of the main items I was going to Ottawa to discuss with the federal minister

of Indian and native affairs there, because we in Ontario believe this is a prime responsibility. We want to see every Ontario resident have access to clean and safe drinking water. We think that's very important, and the federal government must live up to that responsibility. I was to offer more technical support from the province because we have that expertise and we can offer that, through the Ministry of the Environment and other agencies, but we need the federal government to make sure that that's provided to all those communities.

Mr. Hampton: I keep bringing up this issue because former Ontario governments recognized that the need was so urgent, that the health implications were so desperate—these children can't speak for themselves—that other Ontario governments stepped up to the plate to ensure that schools and children had access to safe, clean drinking water.

I think what people saw yesterday was you, the minister, going to Ottawa to engage in another game of McGuinty one-upmanship with the federal government. You're interested in using aboriginal people for the purposes of your own partisan political agenda—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. I need to be able to hear the leader of the third party.

Mr. Hampton: What the people at the Cat Lake First Nation school are asking for are 300 four-litre jugs of water so that kids at the school will have access to safe, clean drinking water. My question is this: Will the McGuinty government stop using issues like this for your campaign against the federal government in Ottawa? Will you stop wasting millions of dollars on partisan political ads and step up to the plate and do something meaningful for ordinary—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: I have quotes here from the grand chief of Mushkegowuk tribal council and Grand Chief Stan Beardy. Time after time they will say, as late as last week, that this is the responsibility of the federal government. They have not come to us to say, "Take this over"; they have come to ask us to be their advocate, which we've agreed to do. That's why we're going to Ottawa. That's why we're pressuring the federal government to make sure they live up to their responsibility. We want to partner with them and make sure we can bring the technical expertise to get these systems right, but the federal government has to bring the money upfront to make sure that happens in these communities.

The tribal chiefs and the grand chief support that, and together we're going to Ottawa to make sure Ottawa does the proper job on behalf of First Nations.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): To the Attorney General: We continue to hear the stories about the backlog in our criminal courts, and now it seems that that same backlog problem is hitting our family courts.

I received a call this morning from a constituent who had spent the last three weeks at the Newmarket court-

house waiting for a family law case to be heard. Two weeks ago, they appeared with their lawyers and they were told that there were no family law court judges to hear cases at all. They were asked to return the following week. Last Wednesday, waiting the entire day, at a cost of \$5,000 for legal representation, at the end of the day they were told to return the following week. Today, this morning, they appeared again with their lawyers. They were told that there was only one Family Court judge to hear 50 cases. After \$6,000 in legal fees, they are still awaiting their access to justice. Minister, is this appropriate, and what will you do to address—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The question has been asked.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): First, if there's some way in which I or the government can assist your constituent, I'll certainly undertake to do that and work with you to do that.

I'm assuming you're talking about the Ontario Superior Court and you're talking about Family Court judicial appointments. I'm sure the member is also aware that Superior Court appointments are in the hands of the federal government. So I would appreciate it if the member would join the Chief Justice of the Superior Court and this government in our continued efforts to try and get the federal government to fill the backlog that exists on the Superior Court when it comes to family courts. Will you help me in that regard?

Mr. Klees: Attorney General, Rehana Sumar is in the gallery today. I asked her to be here because I did anticipate that you would agree to help. So I would ask that, following question period, you would in fact agree to meet with her so that you can hear first-hand what the issue is and what the hurtful results of this mismanagement of the court system are.

1510

Will you agree to assume your responsibility as Attorney General rather than laying this responsibility off once again on the federal government? Will you go to bat for Ms. Sumar and all of the other people in this province who are not getting the access to justice that they deserve? Will you pick up the phone? Will you do what has to be done, whether it's with regard to the management of the schedules in these courts or the appointment of judges? Will you agree to do that and will you agree to meet with Ms. Sumar after question period today?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: I'll agree to do what is appropriate in the circumstances. I'm sure the member wouldn't want me to insert myself in a matter that's before the courts. I know the Integrity Commissioner has spoken to this issue and reminded all members in his recent report about the obligations of members under the Members' Integrity Act not to interfere with matters that are before the court, but I've already undertaken to do whatever is appropriate.

In three years, this government has appointed more judges to the Ontario Court of Justice than in any other three-year period in the history of the province. We have appointed in the same amount of time approximately 60

new members to the Ontario court at a time in which the Superior Court—about the same-size court—has appointed just over 40 members to that court. What that means is that there is a significant difference and a very different approach. What we're saying is, we are doing our part within our jurisdiction. We need the federal government to do their part within their jurisdiction, and I know the member—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

MINIMUM WAGE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): My question is for the Premier. You say you're standing up for Ontarians, but not the approximately 1.2 million full-time workers in Ontario who are living in poverty because they're earning less than \$10 an hour.

A job should keep you out of poverty, not keep you in it. Ontario's minimum wage is not a fair wage. It is not a living wage. It is not good for our families, for our workers, our businesses or our province's future.

Premier, I'm asking you, will you support my bill tomorrow to increase the minimum wage to \$10 an hour for those thousands of workers, most of whom are women, immigrants or single parents?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): I want to thank the member for the question and say to her that I would hope she takes the opportunity to look back at her own campaign material, which talked about raising the minimum wage to \$8 an hour.

We believe that it's important to have a balanced approach, that we look after the needs of those vulnerable individuals, as well as the impact it could have potentially on businesses. We had not seen an increase in the minimum wage in this province in over nine years. As we moved forward, we made a commitment to phase in the increase of minimum wage over a four-year period. Right now the minimum wage in this province is \$7.75 an hour, with the intent to rise to \$8 an hour by February 2007.

Certainly we support the intent of her legislation; we just don't support the timelines that she puts in place. We believe in moving forward in a fair and balanced approach.

Ms. DiNovo: Minister, at the rate you're raising the minimum wage, it will be another seven years before we see \$10 an hour. I would point you to 1972: The minimum wage was \$2 an hour. According to the Bank of Canada inflation calculator, that would be just under \$10 an hour today. That means our poor are poorer now than they were in 1972 under your watch.

Premier, finally, I ask you again, are you telling working families making minimum wage that they deserve to live in poverty?

Hon. Mr. Peters: For the NDP to stand up and think they have a monopoly on being concerned about vulnerable workers, they're terribly wrong. I'm very proud of the commitment we've made to help support vulner-

able workers in this province. We made a commitment to raise the minimum wage in this province, the minimum wage being at \$7.75 an hour. We have made a commitment to move forward in hiring additional inspectors to protect the health and safety of all workers in this province. We've stepped up our employment standards enforcement in this province to make sure that vulnerable workers have what is owing to them.

Again I remind the honourable member that her party campaigned on an \$8-an-hour minimum wage. We moved forward in a balanced and progressive plan and on February 1, 2007, the minimum wage in this province will rise to \$8 an hour. But I also remind the honourable member that Ontario's minimum wage, behind the three territories, is one of the highest we'll find in Canada.

SÉCURITÉ AU TRAVAIL POUR ÉTUDIANTS

WORKPLACE SAFETY FOR STUDENTS

M. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): Ma question est pour le ministre du Travail. Pendant la journée Invitons nos jeunes au travail, les jeunes ont l'opportunité de passer la journée avec un individu qui fait un travail qui les intéresse. Ils peuvent apprendre la valeur et l'importance du travail ainsi que découvrir quelle sorte de métier les inspire le plus. Le but est aussi de leur montrer l'importance de la sécurité au travail. Un travailleur est six fois plus susceptible de se blesser au travail au cours du premier mois de travail qu'à tout autre moment de sa carrière.

Ces statistiques sont vraies, quel que soit l'âge du travailleur, et elles concernent particulièrement les jeunes travailleurs qui commencent à travailler avec peu ou pas d'expérience ou de formation.

It's for this reason, Minister, that job safety for young workers is of utmost importance. Could you please tell us what you are doing to protect young workers on the job.

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): Merci to the member. I want everyone to know that the health and safety of our young workers is a personal priority for me, because we're making sure, and we're committed to making sure, that our young sons and daughters come home from work each and every day.

We have asked our health and safety inspectors to pay special attention to orientation, training and supervision given to new and young workers. We also understand the importance in delivering a message in incident prevention. That's why we've moved forward with our Live Safe! Work Smart! program and provided resources to secondary school teachers.

As well, we're moving forward on our minister's action group for vulnerable workers under the age of 25. We recognize that those individuals particularly between the age of 19 and 24 are very vulnerable. As well, we revised the Employment Standards Act last spring, which now includes a direct reference to our young workers. This was a change inspired by young workers and the

efforts are paying off. I'm proud to report that Ontario now leads the country in improving workplace safety—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary?

M. McNeely: Merci, ministre. Dans ma circonscription d'Ottawa—Orléans, il y a tant de jeunes familles qui sont concernées avec la sécurité des enfants lorsqu'ils entrent le monde du travail.

Workplace safety is a priority for the McGuinty government as young people across Ontario accompany a parent, relative or friend to work today. I know we must all make an effort to teach them about the importance of workplace health and safety. Educating and informing our young people is the best way to ensure that they know how to perform their jobs safely. Perhaps more importantly, we must teach them how to identify work situations that may prove to be unsafe. It is often very difficult for young people to express their concerns to their supervisors. Therefore, we must all do our part to empower them so that they understand, for instance, that they have the right to refuse unsafe work. Minister, how are you getting your message across to young people?

Hon. Mr. Peters: I thank the member for his question and his advocacy. I would encourage every one of us in this House to be advocates for young workers' health and safety because we need to do what we can to get that message out in any way we can.

For instance, today I spoke to 20 children, who took that opportunity to come to work with their parents and their family members, to talk about some of the initiatives we're taking within the Ministry of Labour, but, as well, what they can do to have their first experience in the workplace.

In addition, as I said earlier, we provide a variety of excellent resources to help to get that message out. The Live Safe! Work Smart! program is an excellent resource for teachers. A new, youth-friendly portal on the ministry website leads young workers to easy-to-understand information about how to protect their health and safety and understand their employment rights.

It's important that we get that message out because these young workers are our future. These young workers as well need to understand that they do have the right to say—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

1520

DEVELOPMENT IN SIMCOE COUNTY

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Your ministry is leading the intergovernmental action plan to assist in planning development in Simcoe county. As part of this, the Ministry of the Environment paid the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority \$1.5 million to develop the framework that provides advice on development plans and, most importantly, their impact on Lake Simcoe.

Despite the conservation authority's advice, your IGAP process is now recommending a strategy for

development that would allow the level of phosphorus flowing into Lake Simcoe to increase, even though the authority told you that phosphorus levels in the lake are a problem.

Minister, why do you support increasing phosphorus levels in Lake Simcoe?

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I appreciate the question from the member. First of all, the IGAP process, the study that was done, was done on a joint basis between the province and the political leadership in Simcoe county. It basically dealt with the overall planning that's required in the county, as well as environmental studies with respect to watersheds. The report is simply a report to both the government and the county of Simcoe. It was jointly paid for by the two levels of government, and it will be studied by both levels of government.

We understand that in Simcoe county, municipal elections are going on right now, but as soon as the elections are over, the new council will be taking a look at that report and will be developing a local solution to deal with both the planning issues and the environmental issues. We, as a government and a ministry, are more than happy to work with them in that regard.

Mrs. Munro: Minister, increased phosphorus levels in Lake Simcoe would mean continued degradation of the lake and loss of all of the gains made over the last 15 years. My constituents want to preserve the quality of the water in the lake. Will you guarantee residents around Lake Simcoe that you will not allow an increase in permissible levels of phosphorus in Lake Simcoe?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: I find it fascinating to get that question from that member. I know she's very concerned about it. That's precisely why the study is being done, to see what the environmental situation is with respect to the two watersheds and what kind of development should be allowed in Simcoe county in the future. The former government did absolutely nothing about it, and we wanted to make sure that the processes that happened both at the provincial level and the county level were going to be done in the correct way. That's why the study was funded jointly by the county and the province and that's why we're both looking at the results of the study as to what kind of planning should take place in the future.

We hope that planning will have a local imprint and a local solution attached to it, but we are more than willing to work, as we have in the past, with the political leadership of that county to make sure that the environment is secure and sound and that development will take place in an orderly fashion.

LAND TITLES ASSURANCE FUND

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): A question to the Minister of Government Services: Yesterday, Judge Randall Echlin said that accessing your land titles assurance fund can "involve years of proceedings and tens of thousands of dollars in legal expense, not to

mention heartbreak and aggravation." Minister, what are you going to do to rectify this failure, this flaw of your land titles assurance fund?

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): The member will know, because he's been actively involved in the debate, that we, the government—and the Legislature, I might add—are looking pretty comprehensively now at real estate fraud. We have a bill before the House, as you know, that will deal with a part of that, ensuring that no one would lose their title or would have a document registered against the title fraudulently. I think that's a good move and that will be a big help.

The land title assurance fund is a long-standing fund of the province of Ontario. There are opportunities to improve it; there's absolutely no question of that. It is our intent to improve the administration of it. It is unacceptable for long delays, and we're going to fix that. We're also taking perhaps a little more comprehensive look at the fund itself, at least looking at it being a fund of first resort rather than last resort. So we're looking comprehensively at it, and we'll deal with it in the next few weeks.

Mr. Kormos: Minister, Judge Echlin urged the government to take action so that "past, present, and future victims of fraud under the Land Titles Act are provided with the protection and the assurance they expect from a system run by the government" and held out to the public to be a system that they can rely upon.

You are well aware of the litigation that is ongoing by victims of fraud—innocent victims—who are paying tens of thousands of dollars in legal expense, incurring years of heartbreak before they can finally access the fund. Will you ensure that that land titles assurance fund is accessible to the victims who are out there now who have suffered at the hands of fraud artists? Will you make it retroactive?

Hon. Mr. Phillips: Actually, the fund is accessible to them. They are eligible for recourse to the fund right now retroactively, and anybody in the past.

I would just remind ourselves and the public that, first, the legislation, effective the day we introduced it, will deal with many of these problems. You are aware, but the public may not be, that we are in court supporting one of these particular victims. I would also say to them that the fund already provides them with access to funding for their legal costs.

I also want to say that we can do better. This fund can do better, and we will do better. I've now met twice with a very large group of experts in the area. I'm planning another meeting in another couple of weeks, because when we do implement our improvements, I want to be absolutely sure they're workable—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. New question.

EDUCATION

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): My question is for the Minister of Education. But first I wanted to

thank the minister for coming to Mississauga West yesterday to the Oscar Peterson Public School—it's a new school that just opened its doors to students in 2005—to announce our government's plan to provide \$1 billion worth of funding for 100 new schools in the province.

Interjection: Bravo.

Mrs. Jeffrey: Thank you.

Minister, I know you've been hearing from boards across the province that are struggling with long-term planning and how they're going to deal with schools that are in a state of disrepair. The new guidelines you released yesterday will give school boards a process they have to follow before considering closing a school. Minister, we know that schools are the heart of Ontario communities, and deciding to close them is rarely an easy decision because it's such a huge loss to a neighbourhood. What kind of criteria will a school board have to consider before they make a decision about closing a school, and how quickly can these kinds of decisions be made?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): Thank you to the member for Brampton Centre for her advocacy for her community. It was a great visit yesterday at Oscar Peterson school. It's a beautiful school.

The two things we announced yesterday: First, the \$1 billion that will allow for approximately 100 new schools around the province is a great announcement for school boards. They have been waiting to know about that money and when it was going to come and what the process would be.

The second part of the announcement was the guidelines to which the member refers. What those accommodation review guidelines will do is require boards of education to consult openly with their communities and to evaluate every school as it exists in the context of the community. So in the discussion about which schools to consolidate or close or how to manage the real estate and the facilities of a school, what we're saying to boards is, you need to look at open evaluation of the school, the value to the students, the value to the community, open consideration of the options and services that could be part of that school, and finally, open consultation—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mrs. Jeffrey: In today's economy, virtually every job requires some level of skills training. In order to pursue the appropriate training path after secondary school, students need to be given opportunities to explore careers and learn about various occupations. Today, Harold M. Brathwaite Secondary School in Brampton is having a fair with 60 representatives from the community, workplace, post-secondary sectors and grade 12 students. They'll participate in panel discussions regarding workplaces and apprenticeships.

Minister, we constantly hear that our province is in desperate need of skilled tradespeople. What specifically is your ministry doing to help students develop awareness for occupations in the construction, plumbing and

electrical trades that they may not have considered, so that they will find satisfying career paths that allow them to succeed?

Hon. Ms. Wynne: The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

1530

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I'd like to thank the member from Brampton Centre for that question. Of course, trades are essential to the prosperity of the province. Whether it's building the buildings or outfitting them inside with electrical wiring or even sprinkler systems, we need the trades for the future.

I'm pleased to announce that one of the programs started by the government of Ontario is the Ontario youth apprenticeship program. It provides a student in high school with the opportunity to get high school credits and, at the same time, begin their apprenticeship. So this year, 20,500 students are going to have the opportunity to participate in OYAP. You get your high school credit; you start your apprenticeship.

It's one of the ways we're trying to engage more and more students and keep them in class longer to get to one of the three destinations of post-secondary success. University, great; college, great; but the trades are an equally important route to success. That's just one of the ways we're making sure we have the trades for the future.

PROPERTY TAXES

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I have a question to the Premier. Premier, Bill 151, the Budget Measures Act that your minister introduced last week, confirms the worst fears of seniors and other taxpayers about the McGuinty government's insatiable thirst for tax dollars.

Paragraph 6 of section 14 of your bill, as proposed, means that, conveniently after the next election, homeowners will be forced to cope with three years of assessment increases all at once. In other words, in a very sneaky manner, you're proposing a massive three-year property assessment increase, a triple whammy, if you will, on the backs of seniors and working families already hard-pressed to make ends meet in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario. Premier, please tell me that the minister made a drafting error, or are you really planning this post-election sneak attack on working families with tax increases?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I know the member opposite doesn't really mean to imply, let alone to state, that somehow there's some kind of nefarious plot here to wreak havoc on seniors. I think what he does know is that we've been working really hard. He understands full well what we inherited—a mess, in short—when it comes to property tax assessment in Ontario. I think there were seven separate pieces of legislation. There were no bare spots left on that tire to patch, it's been so patched.

So we decided to take the time to get it right. In the interim, what we've told seniors and all Ontarians is that

there will, in fact, be a freeze in place while we work to develop a better system.

Mr. Hudak: I guess it's hard to ask for, but I guess I'm asking, Premier, for just a bit of honesty on this issue. You say that there's a tax assessment—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): You might want to rephrase that or withdraw.

Mr. Hudak: I'll rephrase. I expect the Premier to be honest with taxpayers. He's talking about an assessment freeze, but his own bill, tabled in the House yesterday, reveals three years of assessment increases, all coming down on working families and seniors in a single tax year, conveniently after the next election.

Let me tell you about Doug and Tina Palmer from Haliburton. They're retired pensioners on fixed incomes who saw the last assessment of their Dalton McGuinty government skyrocket by 43%, and if they didn't like it, they were told to sell their house. That's one year's increase. Now we find, sneakily after the next provincial election, this Premier proposing a time bomb of a triple increase in assessments. Please, Premier, tell me this is not your intention, that the minister made a drafting error.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm always much appreciative of the enthusiasm and vigour that the member opposite brings to his questions, but it has nothing to do with the substantive aspect that he raises.

I will remind him of the seven separate bills culminating in the disaster of Ontario property tax assessment. There was not one day of committee hearings devoted to those seven separate bills.

If the member opposite is interested in knowing where we're going, he should look at what we've done in other areas as we work hard to improve the quality of the property tax assessment system which we inherited.

First of all, we're enriching the property and sales tax credit in 2006 to ensure seniors continue to receive the full benefit of the credit with the rising federal guaranteed minimum level of income. Furthermore, we offered a 25% increase to the Ontario property tax credit for seniors in 2004 after a 12-year freeze, providing \$505 million to approximately 700,000 Ontario seniors. If seniors want to know where we're going with respect to this, they need only to look at the recent past.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): My question is to the Premier. A confidential report done by Deloitte for the Ministry of Health shows that aggressive cuts have been made to in-patient mental health beds for people with serious mental illness. At London's St. Joseph's hospital, for example, the number of beds for people with an addiction and mental illness was dramatically cut by 55%, from 28 beds down to 12. At the same time, as the report makes clear, there is a serious lack of community-based mental health services, including supportive housing to help these individuals in the community.

Premier, how is it that in-patient mental health beds can be cut when the community services aren't in place to support these individuals?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I'm always grateful for the question. I know that the member opposite will know already that we've invested over 200 million new dollars in community mental health services. Those were the first investments in community mental health in Ontario in over 12 years. What it means for people, though, of course, is that 113,800 more Ontarians are now able to access mental health services in their communities. We think there is obviously more to do, but we're very proud of the progress we have made together working with Ontarians.

Ms. Martel: People must wonder where the money went, because the report is very clear that the community services aren't in place to meet the needs of people suffering from mental illness. In Kingston, the report says, there continues to be a need for additional community mental health services to support high-needs clients. In Ottawa, the Royal Ottawa hospital administration said that transitioning patients out of the hospital to the community has not been successful due to a lack of resources. At St. Joseph's Healthcare in Hamilton, the report notes, "There continues to be a challenge in accessing community resources to support the timing of the discharge of patients."

Premier, I ask you again, when will your government finally put in place the supportive housing and specialized long-term-care and treatment programs to really support individuals with mental illness in the community?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: You know, the record is always important in these matters. In 1992, the NDP cut mental health funding by \$23 million. But there's more: In 1994, they cut mental health funding by \$42.4 million.

Again, in our first three years we invested over \$200 million more in community mental health services. In terms of some local numbers: in London alone, \$17.3 million more to the Erie St. Clair and South West local health integration networks; \$5.4 million more for mental health in Middlesex; \$6.2 million more with the increase in Leeds-Grenville, Frontenac and Lennox and Addington counties.

So, yes, there is more work to be done, but the fact of the matter is that we continue to make progress on the ground, where it counts.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): My question is for the Minister of Energy. I have a conservation forum in Hamilton to encourage a better understanding of and give my constituents the tools they need to conserve energy. My constituents benefit, like everyone in Ontario, from the cleaner air and lower costs that come from reduced energy use and they're prepared to do their part to reduce their energy consumption. This forum was very well attended and enjoyed the wonderful support of Horizon Utilities and Mr. Peter Ormond, as well as all the community. It's important that the government play a

leadership role in energy efficiency. Although I understand that we need to bring new generation online because the previous government made no investment in new generation, I also understand that it's easier to save a megawatt than to build one.

I also understand the Canadian Energy Efficiency Alliance recently released its annual report card, and that Ontario has received a grade of B+ from the alliance. Minister, what steps has Ontario taken to earn such a wonderful grade?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): I don't know if members heard the question. This morning, the Canadian Energy—I wish the member from Kenora-Rainy River wouldn't leave. He should hear this. Today we received, on energy conservation, energy efficiency, a grade of B+, up from D under the previous government. The member for Kenora-Rainy River, who didn't want to stay and listen to that, said this government has done nothing—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): You cannot refer to a member's presence or absence in this place.

1540

Hon. Mr. Duncan: The member from Kenora-Rainy River has tried to say, and has said in this House in the past, that we had no plan. The Canadian Energy Efficiency Alliance says that not only do we have the plan, we have a Premier who's engaged in the plan, and that this government is leading Canada and North America on energy conservation. It has not been easy, because the NDP closed down all conservation programs in Ontario in 1995. They don't understand the environment. That's why they're losing votes to the Green Party, but this government—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Ms. Marsales: It's encouraging to hear that this government is committed to conservation and has the plans to back that commitment. It's imperative that we promote conservation; not only that, but that, as a government, we show leadership ourselves and reduce consumption in government buildings. The opposition has called our conservation spending a misplaced priority and has tried to attack the positive steps we're taking, frequently citing California as a beacon of energy efficiency.

Minister, can you set the record straight? What is the government doing to conserve energy in its own backyard, and where does Ontario stand in terms of energy efficiency vis-à-vis California?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: That is again something that's been addressed in this report card. Ontario's right up there with California. With our Energy Efficiency Act, we have the highest standards, along with California, on 95% of the products that are carried under that.

Unfortunately, polygraphs aren't covered under that act yet. Maybe we're going to want to add those next year. The truth is, the changes we made this year to our Building Code Act have saved the equivalent of the electricity use of 380,000 homes.

This is a government that understands conservation, understands the environment, has moved on the environ-

ment, is cleaning up energy—and, by the way, prices are coming down. Everything that should be coming down in energy is coming down, and the things that should be going up are going up, unlike the previous two governments in this province.

CORMORANT POPULATION

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): I have a question for the Minister of Natural Resources that deals with a bill recently tabled by your colleague the member for Prince Edward–Hastings, which would amend the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act. As you know, in the Thousand Islands and in the member's own area, cormorants are creating significant challenges in terms of the commercial and sports fishery. They're eating 42 million pounds of fish per year. This is a serious problem. They're toxic—their droppings are toxic. They're killing islands. They're resulting in the closure of public beaches.

Minister, will you stand in this House today and indicate to all of us, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters and others who are very much concerned with this situation, that you will support your own colleague's initiative?

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): I applaud my colleague's initiative. He works very hard for not only his constituency but his region. As the member has just said, this particular bird has caused severe terrestrial damage on many of the islands and Lake Ontario and has obviously threatened the commercial and sports fishery in our Great lakes and other inland lakes as they're moving in now. I understand very much his motives bringing in this forward. I wish him well with the bill and very much support what he's doing.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to correct my own record. The US minimum wage is \$5.15 an hour.

PETITIONS

PHARMACISTS

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): Thank you very much for the opportunity to present a petition on an issue that's very important to my constituents in Durham, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the McGuinty government passed the Transparent Drug System for Patients Act; and

"Whereas as a result of the regulations of the bill, generic drug companies are required to supply drugs at the cost prescribed by the government; and

"Whereas generic companies have not agreed to these terms; and

"Whereas pharmacists are required to purchase the drugs at prices set by the generic companies; and

"Whereas the government's new formulary does not fully reimburse pharmacists for the cost of drugs; and

"Whereas the government has removed the 'cost to operator' provision; and

"Whereas pharmacists are forced to either lose money or bill patients for the actual cost of the drugs; and

"Whereas the viability of small, independent pharmacists is being threatened through the government's actions;

"Now therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government immediately return the 'cost to operator' provision, thereby guaranteeing affordable access to medication for all patients" in the province of Ontario.

I'm pleased to sign and support this and I present it to Dominic, one of the outgoing pages here.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition signed by residents of Niagara Falls and St. Catharines and delivered to me by the SEIU. It reads as follows:

"Whereas, in June 2003, Dalton McGuinty said that Ontario Liberals are committed to ensuring that nursing home residents receive more personal care each day and will reinstate minimum standards, and inspectors will be required to audit the staff-to-resident ratios; and

"Whereas Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman, in October 2004, said that the Ontario government will not set a specified number of care hours nursing home residents are to receive each day; and

"Whereas Ontario nursing home residents still receive the lowest number of care hours in the Western world; and

"Whereas studies have indicated nursing home residents should receive at least 4.1 hours of nursing care per day; and

"Whereas a coroner's jury in April 2005 recommended that the Ontario government establish a minimum number of care hours that nursing home residents must receive each day;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario immediately enact a minimum standard of 3.5 hours of nursing care for each nursing home resident per day."

I agree with the petitioners and I have affixed my signature to this.

FAIR ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): Again today I have a petition.

"In Support of Skilled Immigrants—Bill 124

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government is committed to establishing measures that will break down barriers for Ontario newcomers; and

"Whereas these measures will ensure that the 34 regulatory professions in Ontario have admissions and application practices that are fair, clear and open; and

"Whereas these measures will include the establishment of a fairness commissioner and an access centre for internationally trained individuals; and

"Whereas, through providing a fair and equitable system, newcomers will be able to apply their global experience, which will not only be beneficial to their long-term career goals but also to the Ontario economy as a whole;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"That all members of the House support the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006, Bill 124, and work to ensure its prompt passage in the Ontario Legislature."

I agree with this petition and will affix my signature to it.

WATER QUALITY

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean—Carleton): I'm delivering this petition today on behalf of the people of rural Ontario and eastern Ontario.

"Whereas every Ontarian wants the best water quality possible; and

"Whereas the goal of clean water can be achieved effectively through amendments to existing legislation; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals are determined to hammer through the flawed legislation known as the Clean Water Act; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals have failed to put in place adequate, stable, long-term funding into the bill; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals have failed to effectively address the numerous problems in the bill; and

"Whereas rural Ontario stands to suffer significantly under this poorly-thought-out policy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To not pass Bill 43 (the Clean Water Act) until proper funding and amendments are in place."

I affix my signature to this petition, which is a bit dated, but I do hope it has made its point.

FAIR ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"In Support of Skilled Immigrants—Bill 124

"Whereas the McGuinty government is committed to establishing measures that will break down barriers for Ontario newcomers; and

"Whereas these measures will ensure that the 34 regulatory professions in Ontario have admissions and application practices that are fair, clear and open; and

"Whereas these measures will include the establishment of a fairness commissioner and an access centre for internationally trained individuals; and

"Whereas, through providing a fair and equitable system, newcomers will be able to apply their global experience, which will not only be beneficial to their long-term career goals but also to the Ontario economy as a whole;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"That all members of the House support the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006, Bill 124, and work to ensure its prompt passage in the Ontario Legislature."

I wholeheartedly support this, affix my signature and send it to you via page Adam.

1550

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound—Muskoka): I have a petition from Hydro One customers in the Oakley township, Draper township and Vankoughnet area east of Bracebridge. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Hydro One Networks Inc. provides hydro to many communities in the region of Parry Sound—Muskoka; and

"Whereas there have recently been several lengthy power outages in this region affecting both private residences, schools and businesses; and

"Whereas rural customers pay among the highest distribution and delivery charges for electricity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Energy and the Ontario Energy Board require Hydro One Networks Inc. to make improvements in line maintenance and forestry management in the region of Parry Sound—Muskoka to ensure reliable energy for its customers."

I support this petition and have affixed my signature to it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): The member from Timmins—James Bay.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins—James Bay): Thank you, Speaker. It's about time you recognized me.

I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas, in June 2003, Dalton McGuinty said Ontario Liberals are committed to ensuring that nursing

home residents receive more personal care each day and will reinstate minimum standards, and inspectors will be required to audit the staff-to-resident ratios; and

"Whereas Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman, in October 2004, said that the Ontario government will not set a specified number of care hours nursing home residents are to receive each day; and

"Whereas Ontario nursing home residents still receive the lowest number of care hours in the Western world; and

"Whereas studies have indicated nursing home residents should receive at least 4.1 hours of nursing care per day; and

"Whereas a coroner's jury in April 2005 recommended the Ontario government establish a minimum number of care hours nursing home residents must receive each day;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario immediately enact a minimum standard of 3.5 hours of nursing care for each nursing home resident per day."

I've signed that and give it to Breanna from Kapuskasing to deliver to the table.

FAIR ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I have a petition in support of skilled immigrants—Bill 124.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government is committed to establishing measures that will break down barriers for Ontario newcomers; and

"Whereas these measures will ensure that the 34 regulatory professions in Ontario have admissions and application practices that are fair, clear and open; and

"Whereas these measures will include the establishment of a fairness commissioner and an access centre for internationally trained individuals; and

"Whereas, through providing a fair and equitable system, newcomers will be able to apply their global experience, which will not only be beneficial to their long-term career goals but also to the Ontario economy as a whole;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"That all members of the House support the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006, Bill 124, and work to ensure its prompt passage in the Ontario Legislature."

I support this petition and affix my signature as well.

HEALTH PREMIUMS

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas, according to the Department of National Defence, there are over 30,000 serving military personnel calling Ontario home; and

"Whereas, according to the most recent census data, there are more than 1.6 million senior citizens over the age of 65 living in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario plans on eliminating this illegitimate tax for all Ontarians after it forms government in 2007; and

"Whereas, as an interim measure, the illegitimate health tax should be removed from those who protect Canada and those who have built Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, call on the government of Ontario to immediately eliminate the illegitimate health tax, beginning with serving military personnel and senior citizens."

I've signed this, and Chad from Bruce-Gray-Owen Sound will take this to the table.

FAIR ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS

Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): This petition reads:

"In Support of Skilled Immigrants—Bill 124

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government is committed to establishing measures that will break down barriers for Ontario newcomers; and

"Whereas these measures will ensure that the 34 regulatory professions in Ontario have admissions and application practices that are fair, clear and open; and

"Whereas these measures will include the establishment of a fairness commissioner and an access centre for internationally trained individuals; and

"Whereas, through providing a fair and equitable system, newcomers will be able to apply their global experience, which will not only be beneficial to their long-term career goals but also to the Ontario economy as a whole;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"That all members of the House support the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006, Bill 124, and work to ensure its prompt passage in the Ontario Legislature."

I agree with the petitioners and I have put my signature on it as well.

FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government is committed to providing the best possible health care system to the people of Ontario;

"Whereas the McGuinty government is committed to improving the quality of life for the people of Ontario;

"Whereas the McGuinty government has moved to expand medical leave to include more members of the immediate family so the people of Ontario can take care of ailing relatives while not having to worry about the loss of their job;

"Whereas the McGuinty government has invested approximately \$611 million in new medical procedures to reduce wait times, with Ontario consistently showing the shortest wait times;

"Whereas hospital funding has been increased by \$2.4 billion;

"We, the undersigned, applaud the McGuinty government for protecting and enhancing Ontario's health care system and the health needs of Ontario's citizens."

I agree with this petition. I affix my signature to it and give it to page Stephen, who is here with me today.

HIGHWAY 35

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): "Highway 35 Four-Laning

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas modern highways are economic lifelines to communities across Ontario and crucial to the growth of Ontario's economy; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has been planning the expansion of Highway 35, and that expansion has been put on hold by the McGuinty government; and

"Whereas Highway 35 provides an important economic link in the overall transportation system—carrying commuter, commercial and high tourist volumes to and from the Kawartha Lakes area and Haliburton; and

"Whereas the final round of public consultation has just been rescheduled;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government move swiftly to complete the four-laning of Highway 35 after the completion of the final public consultation."

This was brought to me by members of the Kawartha Lakes Chamber of Commerce, and I affix my signature to that.

FAIR ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have another petition today:

"In Support of Skilled Immigrants—Bill 124

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government is committed to establishing measures that will break down barriers for Ontario newcomers; and

"Whereas these measures will ensure that the 34 regulatory professions in Ontario have admission and application practices that are fair, clear and open; and

"Whereas these measures will include the establishment of a fairness commissioner and an access centre for internationally trained individuals; and

"Whereas, through providing a fair and equitable system, newcomers will be able to apply their global experience, which will not only be beneficial to their long-term career goals but also to the Ontario economy as a whole;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"That all members of the House support the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006, Bill 124, and work to ensure its prompt passage in the Ontario Legislature."

These are from people from all over Ontario. I agree with this petition and I will affix my signature to it.

HEALTH PREMIUMS

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): "To the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas according to the Department of National Defence, there are over 30,000 serving military personnel calling Ontario home; and

"Whereas according to the most recent census data, there are more than 1.6 million senior citizens over the age of 65 living in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario plans on eliminating this illegitimate tax for all Ontarians after it forms government in 2007; and

"Whereas, as an interim measure, the illegitimate health tax should be removed from those who protect Canada and those who have built Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, call on the government of Ontario to immediately eliminate the illegitimate health tax, beginning with serving military personnel and senior citizens."

I'm agreeing with this and I'm glad to put my name to it. Patrick is our page. He's serving his last day in the House today, I think, and he's here to receive my petition. Is this your last day? He's not sure. I think he's here next week too. I may have made a mistake there.

1600

OPPOSITION DAY

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): I move that in the opinion of this House, the government should spend every single taxpayer dollar wisely and with respect for the taxpayers;

That, in the opinion of this House, some examples of reckless government spending include: \$6 million to remove the C from OLG; \$219,000 to redesign the Ontario Trillium logo; \$20 million to quietly give raises to appointees to government agencies and boards; \$2 million for an inaccurate, partisan advertisement about health care; \$91 million to fire nurses; \$90 million to close or consolidate community care access centres; \$16 million for Dalton McGuinty's "I won't raise your taxes"

Liberal ad agency; \$2 million for LHIN office furniture and design; and \$55 million—at least—on Caledonia.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Mr. Tory has moved opposition day motion number 2. The leader of the official opposition.

Mr. Tory: I think this is a very important debate and an important topic for us to be debating, because at the end of the day what it is most about is respect. It is about respect for the people who sent us here. They are not just the people who sent us here but the very same people who work hard out in the constituencies across the province, in communities across the province, to earn the money that the provincial government then taxes to provide, supposedly, for much-needed public services. I think people have worked hard to earn that money, and they have the right to expect that we're going to take care in how we deal with that money; that we are actually going to set priorities in dealing with that money; that we're going to manage their money responsibly. It is about respect. It is about priority setting. There are so many needs out there and there are so many people in need that it is incomprehensible that we could show the kind of disdain and disrespect for the taxpayers' money that we've seen from the McGuinty government, and I'm going to talk a little bit about that today.

As I said, it's not only about respect, it's not only about priority setting, but it's also about management and responsibility. This government under Mr. McGuinty seems to have raised the disclaimers and the absolution of themselves and the pointing of the finger of blame at somebody else to a new art form. It just isn't acceptable—if you really believe in accountability, if you really believe you have the responsibility for management and for accountably and responsibility—to simply blame somebody else.

What I'd like to do in the time available to me today is to point to three areas where I'd like to compare and contrast what the McGuinty government did and what they could have done, and the situation they left unattended by their wasteful and reckless spending in three specific areas.

Let me start with the McGuinty approach on example number one, which is the example of Bensimon Byrne, the Liberal advertising agency we've heard so much about, and in particular the trillium logo. Bensimon Byrne, in general, so far have received \$16.1 million in business from the McGuinty government. So that people at home will know, this was the very same agency that did all of their advertising, supposedly as volunteers, at the time of the last election, including the famous ads that had Mr. McGuinty saying, "I will not raise your taxes." They did that as supposed volunteers, and now we find that three years later they've received \$16.1 million in government advertising. That includes a monthly retainer, which before the Liberals got elected was \$38,000. Now it has been increased to \$78,500 a month as part of the \$16 million. Some volunteer assignment.

Mr. McGuinty, the Premier, says, "They just win all these competitions fair and square. We have a process

and it works," and it just seems they win all these competitions. Well, I would say to you, the Montreal Canadiens in their heyday, when they won the Stanley Cup every year, would have blushed at this kind of winning record. I know that will make the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound very happy. Tiger Woods would be envious at a winning record like this that Bensimon Byrne has established for themselves: \$16.1 million in government advertising contracts.

So we have that, and then we have inside of that \$219,000 for the trillium logo, which they were appointed. I'm sure they won that competition to redesign fair and square, too. This is, of course, where they took the trillium logo, which had served Ontario well for, I think, about 30 years, and redesigned it to look like the Liberal Party logo. It's going to cost untold millions to change all the signs and the letterhead and so on.

Let me just review with you what the Woodstock Sentinel Review had to say about that. They said, "Change for the sake of change. There was nothing wrong with the old trillium logo and the Grits have created a financial disaster by introducing a revamped version. Surely the monies directed towards the new design could have been better spent elsewhere."

What did the Windsor Star have to say about it? "Leaving aside the fact that a quarter million tax dollars seems an outrageous price for something that you arguably could have sketched out on a cocktail napkin, leaving aside the fact that the existing logo has served this province with distinction for decades and leaving aside the aesthetics of the revamped design which resembled the trillium in the Liberal logo and has been panned by designers and even disgruntled Grits, the optics of this questionable deal would make even a blind man avert his eyes in disgust."

That's not to mention the taxpayers who averted their eyes or had to mop their eyes with a Kleenex in disgust about their hard-earned taxpayers' money going to this boondoggle that these people thought was an appropriate use of taxpayers' money.

Now, let's contrast that with the need that exists out there on the part of autistic children. Let me just share with you an extract from an e-mail sent to me by Joyce and Michael Grant, who are in—I can't tell you where they are. I think they're in Mr. Tascona's riding, Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford. They talk about their son, Timothy, who was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder in January 2005 at age 3: "We've been on the Kinark waiting list since then. We are currently number 13 on the list. With quite a few families also in need ahead of us, it is clear that no one in our region has benefited from any funding in the last year. It is extremely disheartening."

Or we could take the family of Josephine Hutton, who writes to me to say, "For the last 15 years, we've been living in constant survival mode" in respect of their son, "which has taken a big toll on all aspects of our life. The greatest effects have been noticed on my own health. I've developed numerous chronic illnesses caused by constant

stress and trauma. Last, but not least, the constant fighting with government to receive any kind of support. Recently, we've had an urgent referral to a psychiatrist at CPRI. It took six months to get any kind of reply. I finally got a letter telling me that in approximately 18 months I'll be getting an appointment date," and she goes on from there.

Last, but certainly not least, Lisa Prasuhn from Beeton, Ontario: "In April 2004," her daughter Carlyne "was diagnosed with autism and took her place along with the 753 children on an interminable wait list for treatment. It can be difficult to accept," she says, "that our child cannot write with a pencil, eat with a spoon, dress herself, ride a bicycle on her own, ride a school bus with her sister, recognize the dangers of traffic or be able to speak and call me 'Mom.' But even harder to accept is the fact that our provincial government promised me, but is failing to provide, the treatment and services that would help our daughter overcome some of these aspects of her disability."

What does it say about this government that they have this money, \$16 million in contracts for their Liberal ad agency, \$219,000 to redo the trillium logo to the same Liberal ad agency and they have no money to help those people who are writing to us about autism? What does it say about respect for those taxpayers? What does it say about respect for their money? What does it say about priority setting? What does it say about management and responsibility?

I think it says everything about the fact that these people in this government, the McGuinty government, don't care about those things at all.

Example number 2, the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp.: They managed to find \$190,000 to do focus groups to look at taking the C out of their logo because they thought that would make a big difference. I don't know who it would make a big difference to, aside from guess who? The very same ad agency that did that work and won that, I'm sure, fair and square and now is going to cause, as a result of that work, the lottery corporation to spend \$3.185 million on lottery signage in all the different stores and \$2.662 million for signage in casinos and at tracks.

This is what Duncan Brown, the chief executive officer, a man I've had dealings with over the years and a person who I thought otherwise seemed to know what he was doing—let me just read you what he had to say on September 6 in front of committee: "The rebranding initiative was around a need to fill an information gap, a risk to our gaming operation's integrity and reputation, the need to make our messaging more meaningful, an opportunity to bind the thousands of employees together behind a common cause—and, frankly, an opportunity to get much more effective marketing expenditures."

1610

We've now seen, after those words were spoken, a report that came out saying that we seem to maybe have some problems with the security of the system. This other stuff is poppycock; it's just poppycock. They're not

going to sell a ticket; they're not going to make an extra dollar of profit that's going to go to help the environment or hospitals or anything else as a result of this change. The only people who made any money on this are those who are doing this research and advertising and making signs and so on and so forth.

Again, I'll quote from the Toronto Star. Nobody should take it from me. Take it from the Toronto Star. Here's what they had to say: "Consequently, the \$4 million to \$6 million the agency has just spent to drop the C from its name and rebrand itself as the OLG is a colossal waste of money that could have been put to better use in a hospital or a few schools which the lottery supports by feeding the government's coffers. Why should the government-run quasi-monopoly need to brand itself at all when it has no real brand name competition? And how does dropping a C from its name and slightly changing its logo create an impression of trust and integrity, as chief executive Duncan Brown claims? Did it just reflect a certain careless attitude of easy come, easy go by the people who run the agency or was it, as one opposition MPP suggests, a way to pay off a Liberal-friendly ad agency? It's hard to see any credible rationale for throwing away millions on something like this." So said the Toronto Star.

Compare and contrast: In the Peel emergency room, which I visited not too long ago, for people that day the average wait time was 12 hours to be seen by a doctor. Mr. Katz, from Thornhill, Ontario, who wrote me an e-mail, said, "Several weeks ago I had to take my wife to North York General emergency late one evening for an emergency situation related to her being a cancer patient receiving chemotherapy. We had to wait about nine hours, to the early morning, to have a doctor see her and provide a diagnosis. This wait time was agonizing for my wife, who was ill at the time." He then goes on to say, as members might recall, that he himself found out a couple of days later that he had to see an ophthalmologist and was told his appointment would be in August 2007.

Compare and contrast: millions to spend on signs that will do nothing, according to the Toronto Star and just about everybody else; no money to speak of to really invest in solving a crisis that exists in the emergency room or the doctor shortage for millions of people in Ontario. Does it demonstrate respect for the taxpayers' money? Absolutely not. Does it show any sense of priority-setting at all? Absolutely not. Does it show any sense of management, responsibility and accountability? Absolutely not.

The final example is this: They somehow manage to find—these people who sit around at these important meetings in the cabinet room—\$20 million. Mr. McGuinty and his team found \$20 million to give raises to the principally Liberal appointees on boards and agencies. By the way, at the very same time they extended the maximum term those people can serve to 10 years, so they can try to rule from the grave and have their appointments sitting on, long after they're gone on October 4, 2007. That includes the Ontario Film Review Board

chair, who got a 300% increase, the Conservation Review Board chair, who got a 353% increase, and on it goes.

Compare and contrast: No money, but severe cutbacks for the farmers of Ontario. As of today, after two budgets, the two most recent budgets, they're \$400 million short of where they were in the previous year—\$400 million short for the grain and oilseeds farmers, \$400 million not available to people who are struggling, and struggling mightily, to try and keep up.

September 20, 2006, just a couple of weeks ago, a farmer, Mr. Doug Eadie, president of the Corn Producers' Association, was quoted in the Canadian Press: "It's a tragedy, really; it's becoming rampant...."

"Financial institutions and farm suppliers are reconciling their businesses to deal with a much-downsized group of producers, and we'll pay for it, as a province and a country, in the end."

They go on to say, "There has to be something long-term. That's the bottom line...."

He says here, "We feel caught in between, and right now we've hit an income crisis, the third year in a row of record-low prices."

Again I pose the question: What does that say about respect for the taxpayers' money? They have all this money to spend on giving these appointments to agencies and boards, extended terms and much bigger pay packets, hundreds of percentage points in increase. What does it say about priority setting that they let the farmers of Ontario twist in the wind while they give these appointees a big raise? What does it say about management and responsibility?

To conclude, I'll simply say this: This must change, and this will change, because we will make that change when we form a new Progressive Conservative government for the province of Ontario. We will show respect for the taxpayers' money because that is what we were sent here to do: to treat that money with the trust it was sent with by the taxpayers when they earned it. We will set priorities, and we will not place the interests of Liberal-friendly ad agencies ahead of those of autistic children; we will not put the interests of logo redesigns ahead of emergency rooms; we will not put raises for government appointees ahead of the farmers of Ontario. We will actually manage, take responsibility and have some accountability for how the taxpayers' money is applied.

We move this resolution because—in conclusion, I will say—the taxpayers of Ontario simply can't afford another McGuinty government, and we're going to make sure they don't have one.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please. Further debate?

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): It's a pleasure to rise to speak to this motion. Just last week in this Legislature, our Minister of Finance, Greg Sorbara, stood up to present his fall economic statement. He began by saying, "Cast your mind back to 2003." Quite frankly, the only thing I could say was, "Do I have to?" It's just a

little too painful to cast my mind back to 2003, when the Progressive Conservative government was in power, after eight years of being in power in this province. It was painful to remember the state this province was in at that time, and it was painful to remember the kinds of conversations I had to have with constituents at the door: elderly people who were worried about not being able to stay in their home because home care was in such disarray; children and parents who were wondering whether or not they were going to be left out in the cold from their schools once again because of a strike or some sort of disruption in the school system caused by a government that was hell-bent on bringing teachers to heel; people who were tired of not being able to find a family doctor or not being able to get into the hospitals at all for any of the procedures they needed so desperately.

There were so many issues. Quite frankly, the atmosphere was that they could no longer rely on their government or the government services to be there for them. They couldn't even turn on their tap and feel comfortable and confident that what was coming out of that tap wasn't going to hurt them. That was the state that our province, our great province of Ontario, was in, in 2003. So it was painful to have to cast my mind back to that time.

The other part about it was that we had a situation where we had been told that we had no financial issues: Everything was clear sailing. The budget had been presented by the previous government in an outside auto plant and with great show, saying, "Isn't this wonderful? There's no problem." Then, lo and behold, after those tough eight years, the people of Ontario said, "Do you know what? I think we've had enough of you guys. We're going to give these other guys a chance." And the Liberal government, the McGuinty government, was voted in.

One of the first things we did was open the books. We opened the books and—surprise, lo and behold—it is not a balanced budget. There is a \$5.5-billion deficit. We looked in all sorts of other areas. We opened up the books at Ontario Power Generation and looked at the horrific spending habits of some of the executives there. Maybe it's a small thing, but the opposition leader wants us to be accountable for every dollar. Well, how does he account for the former Premier being wined and dined at Canoe for \$700 for lunch by a former aide of his, and then they slid the bill under the OPG? So what did we do?

Oh, and just before I go on: The other thing I think a lot of people had trouble with was that there was a panic by the previous government to cover the fact that they had a deficit, or to try to avoid the deficit that was ballooning out of control, so they sold a highway. They sold the 407 to a Spanish consortium. They gave away the rights to the revenue from that thing for 99 years. Now, when people are trying to drive that highway, they have to pay tolls on that highway, and none of that money is going to benefit taxpayers. The taxpayers of this province paid to have that built. They are not benefiting from that highway in any way, but they are

paying tolls on that highway. That was sort of their last-ditch effort to try to get out of the mess that they had created.

1620

So one of the first things we did as a government was say that we were going to introduce legislation that would allow the Provincial Auditor to open up the books, not just of this government but of the agencies outside this government: school boards, hospitals, OPG, Hydro One. Let's have him look at those books and tell us what kind of state they're in, not after the next election but before the next election, so that the people of this province can see exactly what kind of state the finances are in. That's accountability.

Then you say, "The way it works in politics is that you never really know when the election is going to be, because the party in power just calls it when it suits them, when the polls are looking good." So we now have, for the first time in this country, a fixed election date so we all know when it's going to be. It's going to be in October 2007.

Now the Provincial Auditor knows exactly when those books have to be opened and examined, and when he has to make the report to the public. He knows when the election is, and so the public of this province, the taxpayers of this province, will have the opportunity to see the books and know exactly how this government and its agencies have spent the taxpayers' money, and they can judge for themselves before they go to the polls next time. There won't be any pulling the wool over anybody's eyes.

I want to talk a little bit about what this government has done to rebuild the province, to rebuild the reliable resources and public services we all used to be able to rely on. One of the areas, of course, is health care. There was a tremendous amount of work to be done in health care.

Just recently—you may have heard it in the news just last week—the Fraser Institute, which I believe is aligned with the former Premier as well, came out to say that Ontario, in fact, has the lowest wait times in this country. I would go as far as to say that the Premier of this province has in fact made wait times a national issue. He has put wait times on the national agenda, and we're leading the pack in getting wait times down through a number of key investments we've made.

We've tackled the issue of family doctors by creating family health teams across this province. Family health teams can actually help a doctor see up to 50% more patients, because they use the resources of nurse practitioners, nutritionists and other professionals within the family health team. So the doctor can make the diagnosis and then refer the patient to the appropriate medical professional in the family health team, thereby freeing himself or herself to see the next patient.

We are moving hundreds more foreign-trained professionals and doctors into the system than has ever happened before. We're moving them in much more quickly.

We've increased medical school spaces by 23%, and that means we are growing more doctors in Ontario. To encourage more medical students to stay in Ontario, we have increased our portion of the funding for their tuition so that we're more competitive with other provinces, so we can grow those doctors here in Ontario.

We have created satellite medical campuses in communities where doctors are needed—St. Catharines, Kitchener-Waterloo. The idea is that when students spend so long in medical school, they actually do take root in those communities. So if we're attracting medical students to this province, they are very likely to take root here and stay here.

In our schools, we have not had one single day lost to strikes or labour unrest in the three years we have been in power. We have a tremendous relationship with our partners in the education field, and we have rebuilt the education system. We are restoring specialist teachers, building new schools and engaging parents in the conversation, and there's tremendous peace and stability that has not been there for a very long time.

In the area of the environment, we've done the clean water legislation, moving further on the Walkerton recommendations; we've put forward that there must be 5% ethanol in our gasoline; and we're building ethanol plants. Maybe 5% doesn't seem like much, but that can reduce harmful emissions from our cars by 30%. Ethanol is also a good thing for farmers, because we use corn to make ethanol. So we get a win-win: We get better air and we are supporting our farmers at the same time.

We are uploading where the previous government downloaded. We've uploaded land ambulance costs; we've uploaded public health costs; we have provided municipalities with much-needed funding to repair their roads.

I could go on and on, but I have other speakers who wish to speak to this bill. I have to tell you that we have done a tremendous amount that is responsible. We take the work that we're doing here extremely seriously. I have never met, in my entire life, a harder-working man than the Premier of this province. He is a visionary. Every time a decision is made, we have to climb up in the crow's nest and look out 20, 30, 40, 50 and 100 years and say, "What do we need to be there and how do we get there by making the decisions we do now?", incrementally making structural and very deliberate decisions around how to grow this province on a reliable path not just now but well into the future for future generations, because the province is not ours; we are building it for our future generations.

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): In the few minutes I have here, I'd like to talk about the waste that this Liberal government has forced upon the Ontario people in the last three years. I know some of it was mentioned, but if you think of it—the stuff that really bothers me is the \$6 million they took to remove the "C." All they could put into their bill was \$7 million on the water bill that they put in. Then they come into this House and say, "If you didn't vote for the bill, you

were against clean water.” How naive is the Liberal Party? Well, I don’t think there’s—you can’t explain it, they’re so bad. All they could come up with was \$7 million—that’s not going to do anybody any good. It cost \$6 million, though, just to take the “C.”

The money they spent to change the trillium logo: That’s offensive, if you want me to tell you. I live in the country, where we do have trilliums that grow, where that flower actually is, and for them to come up with a symbol that looks like three men in a tub, because that’s all they could come up with, and spend all the money on the waste that they’ve done—people in rural Ontario are aghast with this government and the things they are doing.

They don’t care about our seniors. I’d like to read a letter that I got from some seniors in my area about the lack of investment in seniors:

“The recently proposed Long-Term Care Homes Act promises comfort and dignity for all long-term-care residents, but for over 35,000 of them who live in older homes, the promise is empty.

“They will continue to live in three- or four-bed wards and to line up in wheelchairs in crowded dining rooms, uncertain even about the future of their homes in their communities.

“They are the forgotten” by this Liberal government. “The Meaford LTCC, where my mother lives, has been forgotten. Government has no vision or plan for them.” This is coming to me from constituents in my riding.

“Instead of a commitment to secure their future and their home, this legislation makes no commitment to fund the structural renewal of older homes.... Please ask government to remove the cloud of uncertainty they have placed over these residents, their families and communities by ... committing to fund the renewal of older homes now. They deserve a plan now, not 10 years from now.

“Just three years ago, in the election, you”—the Liberals—“promised \$6,000 in additional care for every resident and an additional 20 minutes of care.”

This is just one of the many, many letters that I have received over the days from people in my riding who are concerned about people living in older homes and the seniors in our community. Yet they can go on and waste millions of dollars—just millions of dollars. You think about the \$55 million—and it’s climbing every day in Caledon—and nothing’s being done about it. This government goes and buys the land; they own it now, and they still pay the heat and the hydro to those homes that were there. They just don’t have any idea about what it is to finance this province. They can just go out there and say, “Oh, well, we have money here, we have money there,” but when it comes to seniors and rural Ontario, they totally forget about us.

This government has let the people in rural and northern Ontario down drastically. They just keep on spending and spending money that we don’t have. They just have no idea what the world is all about. It’s unfortunate that we are saddled in Ontario with a government like this.

1630

That’s why today I wanted, in my few minutes, to speak on this opposition motion. I know the Liberals will all come in here and they’ll be whipped in here to vote against it. There’s no doubt. That’s one of those other broken promises where Mr. McGuinty said, “You know, people, we’re going to listen to everybody. We’re going to listen to the backbenchers in our own party and in other parties as well.” That was one of the worst promises he made, because he has never listened to any of us. They’ll whip them in here. They’ll have to come in and vote even though they know in their own hearts the money they are wasting. Just think, there are four members who come to this assembly from London. Their voices aren’t even heard anymore. This government has allowed Toronto to take—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): A new dump there.

Mr. Murdoch: A new dump there. Isn’t this awful? We haven’t heard one word from the members in London, which is unfortunate. And then they waste money on all these items. Why couldn’t they have used some of this money to help those members out and to help fight something like that? But I guess it’s unfortunate that London is going to have to take all the garbage from all over Ontario. Those are things that this government lets happen.

The main thing is the waste that they’ve caused and the money they’ve spent on all these items that are listed here. It’s a shameful day today that this would happen in Ontario, that this government would do these things.

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): I’m delighted to have the opportunity to speak against this motion today. I find it amusing that the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound said that our government was leaving the north behind. I represent the proud riding of Nipissing, and certainly in Nipissing we do not feel that this government has left us behind.

It’s actually quite amazing that the previous government could put forward this motion about accountability when they, in fact, left this province with a larger debt than we’ve ever seen and left us with a \$5.6-billion deficit to dig ourselves out of, not to mention the structural deficit that was left behind with the roads and bridges across the north—

Interjection.

Ms. Smith: —including in your riding of Timmins–James Bay—that were left unattended to for years. For years we saw the Tory government presenting plastic cheques, rubber cheques that bounced all over the province; plastic cheques for big infrastructure investments in our province that never took place, that never moved forward.

Let me talk to you a little bit about my riding and the rubber cheques we saw in our riding. We saw promises of moving forward with our hospital—big pictures, big hoopla, the Premier, shovels. They’ve had shovels in the ground, but there was no movement for five years. Our hospital was supposed to be done in 2005. Well, it’s 2006 and, thanks to the McGuinty government, we’re going to

see movement on that hospital and shovels in the ground in March, if not sooner. It's the first time we've seen that kind of movement.

We have a hospital in Mattawa that for 27 years languished in portables. It's a deplorable situation for our health care workers. And now, because of the McGuinty government, we're moving forward with that project, where for some reason the previous government—and I will tell you that the Premier was from my riding—was unable to deliver on these promises they made to our communities, to our residents.

We've seen movement on Highway 11, which is a long-promised issue in my riding, something we're very proud to be saying that we will have completed by 2012.

These are the kinds of investments that our residents want to see and that they've long waited for but the previous government, for whatever reason, was unable to make. That is my question: Where was the accountability of that previous government? Where was their responsible spending? We saw big rubber cheques, we saw lots of advertising, we saw lots of glitz and glamour, but we saw very little substantial investment in our communities, particularly in the north. We saw very little investment in our schools. In my riding alone, in one board in my riding—and I have four boards—we are seeing 19 schools being repaired as we speak. We are seeing improvements in the quality of life of all of those students.

I had the privilege of having the Minister of Education in my riding this week, and we visited four schools—two brand new schools and two schools that definitely need some help. We saw some really great educational tools in all of those schools because our government is investing in our future, in our children.

I want to say hello to my niece Kate, who's watching today, I hope. She's one of the reasons that I got involved in politics and that I enjoy every day my job of improving the life of our children in the province. She's three and a half. She's going to junior kindergarten. We're seeing her class size maintained at 20 students or fewer, and we're working towards achieving that goal across the province. That is a strategic investment by this government to improve the quality of life for our students across the province. I don't think people really appreciate the value that that is going to have over the long term as our students in those younger years get the appropriate attention that they need.

Speaking of attention that they need, in my riding as well we've seen investment in a children's treatment centre, something that's been promised in North Bay for over 20 years. The previous government talked a good line; I spoke to pediatricians in my riding who had heard that it was coming for years from the previous government. Again, where is the accountability? Where are they to answer for the promises they made and never invested in? Today we are seeing the children's treatment centre developing and growing in my riding. They're in a temporary spot right now, but they're moving forward with their permanent site. They have great plans, and they are serving the children in my community as they

should be served, like every other child across the province.

The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound spoke of long-term care. As you know, this is an issue very near and dear to my heart, and I'd just like to address some of the issues that he raised. While it's not part of this motion in particular, it does reflect a certain sense of the accountability that the previous government failed to have with respect to our seniors. While they did build some new homes and beds across the province, they put them in the wrong places. We have certain areas in the province today that have a lot of over-bedding, where we have empty beds going for want. In other areas across the province, we have incredibly long waiting lists.

We have a different type of home across the province, which the member alluded to, and that is because the previous government did not have a plan for the redevelopment of all of our homes. We've introduced legislation that will allow us, in phases, to look at different kinds of homes that we have across the province and ensure that every resident in our long-term-care homes has the appropriate level of care and is treated with dignity and respect. That is the basis of our legislation. That is what we're moving forward with.

Our government is incredibly committed to the well-being of all Ontarians—our seniors in our long-term-care homes, our seniors who want to age in place—and for that reason we've invested tremendous amounts of money into home care so we can have our seniors age in place across the province.

For all of our citizens looking for training and apprenticeship, we've seen some great investments in that area, particularly in my region through Canadore College and Nipissing University that I spoke so proudly of today, rating so very highly in the Globe and Mail university survey. But we're also looking out for our children through our smaller class sizes and our literacy and numeracy programs.

Our government has also introduced some really important initiatives that will ensure accountability of where the money is spent in the province. Unlike the previous government, we can now conduct full-scope value-for-money audits of school boards, universities and colleges, hospitals and all crown-controlled corporations. As well, the auditor has the final sign-off on the province's books before a general election, so that future governments will not be stuck with the type of deficit situation we were stuck with and that we've spent the last three years digging ourselves out of.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak against this motion. I am firmly committed to our record. I'm very proud of what the McGuinty government has achieved to this point. We continue to grow and improve the quality of life for all Ontarians.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): It's a pleasure to stand on this opposition day and put on the record what is actually happening. I think that's what's important: to bring the people of Ontario up to date, at least as we see it. That's what opposition days are about. I respectfully

think that it's important for people in Ontario, without any partisan aspect to it, to listen to our leader, John Tory, and the purpose of this opposition day motion.

I'm just going to read it, because it's important always to have a reminder of where we are. This is the opposition day motion. It says: "That in the opinion of this House, the government should spend every single taxpayer dollar wisely and with respect for the taxpayers."

I pick up on the main themes that he talked about during his opening remarks to remind people that this debate really is about respect—and not just of taxpayers' dollars or the hard-working people of Ontario—and it's about trust. And trust and respect go together. It's about, at the end of the day, integrity. All of those things around the life of a politician today are absolutely pivotal in giving them your vote, your support. It's that trust and that bond that we're reminding people of today, sort of a report card of where we are as we move into the winter season.

Our leader, John Tory, gave three specific examples that are quite understandable and digestible by the people of Ontario, but they also speak to the larger issue of the respect and integrity that is fundamental to the role of public service. He talked about the 50 or more promises—in fact there were 200 promises, I think—made in the red book by the McGuinty government during the election.

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What I'm so disappointed at is that it's fine to say things when people ask you, "Would you raise taxes or would you not?" or "Would you support agriculture?" or "Would you support children with autism?" What they said to the parents of an autistic child was, "Yes, we'll fix the problem," and they haven't fixed the problem. That, in some languages, is called—there's a word for it; we're not allowed to say it here. But it's really not being forthright with the people of Ontario. When they ask you a question, it's the respect and integrity and the trust—if you tell them you're going to do something, they should expect that you're going to do it.

What is really important to look at in relationship to this is—I can remember the ads; I can see them. They were very well done ads. Those ads were with the Premier leaning up against a lamppost. I didn't quite get the ad, technically, the set-up for it, but he was leaning up against a lamp and saying, "I won't raise your taxes, but I won't lower them either."

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): It was a tree.

Mr. O'Toole: Well, it was a tree or whatever. It looked like a drunk by a lamppost, actually. But he was leaning up against a tree and he said, "I won't raise your taxes, but I won't lower them either." The very first thing he did—it's now down in history. It's the largest single tax hike in the history of Ontario. With the stroke of a pen, \$2.5 billion of additional revenue, but not one cent for autism, not one cent for agriculture and not one cent for the people of Ontario. The arrogance and smugness sometimes in here, as if they had committed no wrong.

You ask your neighbour, "Are you better off?" and you will find there are longer waiting lists, there's trouble in the emergency rooms and there's trouble in our schools. Almost all of them are in deficit. We know that. It isn't better, it isn't going to be better, and the reason is simple: You can't trust someone who doesn't respect what they say.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I guess we're skipping in rotation here, but anyway, very briefly, I wanted to indicate that with this motion in front of us today, the key question or the key point to remember is that the Liberals came to office with a \$5.56-billion deficit. That's the inheritance that was left by the Conservative government. We've reduced that. If there's any waste at all, it comes from the previous Conservative government. They need to own up to that and deal with that before they can start going after and nitpicking on small little points like the ones today.

We've got better hospitals and better schools than we've had in the past, and we continue to improve them. I'm proud to stand here today to support our government, and I will certainly be voting against this motion today.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): For three long years, the McGuinty government has mismanaged and squandered Ontario's money. As John Tory pointed out, this government spent \$6 million to drop a letter from an acronym. That's disgraceful. Would that \$6 million not have been better spent on Ontario's disabled, the people who need the money the most, Ontario's most vulnerable? In the time this government has been in office, they've failed to take responsibility for the disabled. The fact is, when adjusted for inflation, Ontario's disabled pensions are hundreds less than in 1997, under the previous government. These are not my calculations but those of the Toronto Star on August 26, 2006.

If that is not bad enough, this government is now bamboozling Ontarians through advertising. The McGuinty government has spent \$2 million to tell residents of Ontario that they could now see a doctor. Before that TV ad ran, there were 20,000 residents in Cambridge riding who were without a family doctor. Today, since that ad ran, there are still 20,000 men, women and children without a family doctor in Cambridge.

It has become increasingly apparent that this government will say anything to get re-elected. I find this ad campaign totally offensive—to say to someone, "The doctor will see you now," when there is no doctor in sight. In that same say-anything-to-get-elected ad campaign, this government also said that wait times were down. I think the people of Ontario and Cambridge who have been waiting six months for an MRI would disagree.

This government cannot balance the budget. However, the McGuinty government seems to be swimming in money, so much so that they could waste \$219,000 to redesign a logo and another \$20 million on raises to government agencies and boards. But what is the result for Ontarians' bare pocketbooks? Ontarians are completely overtaxed and continue to pay for more mismanagement and wasteful spending. It is time for this government to

take responsibility for its mismanagement. It's time to start making real investment in Ontario. The people of Ontario deserve a better government than one that runs on empty promises. Ontarians want results now. I, for one, am tired of seeing headlines that read, "A \$30-Million Investment," and when you read the fine print, the \$30 million isn't coming for 30 years. Ontarians need assistance now.

This government seems to have forgotten that when you make a promise, you keep it. I guess breaking promises becomes second nature after you've broken more than 50 of them. I would ask this government to start working with the people of Ontario, stop the mismanagement and waste, and address the real needs of Ontarians, especially the most vulnerable.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I'm just so pleased to stand here in the House this afternoon on behalf of all New Democrats to speak on this debate, because it gives us an opportunity, quite frankly, to review a little bit of what we've seen here over the last three years.

However, I just want to remind my good friends in the Conservative caucus, when they're saying, "When we form the government," that I wouldn't presume to know who's going to form the government next time. I've been around this place long enough to know that elections are decided in 27 days. I've seen election swings go from where David Peterson was at 60% to where New Democrats have won, and vice versa with the Tories. So you don't know what's going to happen. I would just say that there are going to be three political parties to choose from in the next election, and I'm encouraging those people to pick the NDP. I want to put that on the record.

Mr. Murdoch: Are you biased?

Mr. Bisson: Of course I'm biased. I believe in New Democrats. Bill, you had your chance. The member could have come to the New Democrats earlier in this mandate. Anyway, enough of that. Let's get on to the debate.

This is an interesting motion, because I actually agree with some of what's in here, quite frankly. The government has done a number of things that have cost a fair amount of money, and you've got to scratch your head, as they say, and wonder what they're up to. One comes to mind that I think is kind of an interesting one. Earlier this year, I think in August of this past summer, the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. came before a committee in order to do what has not been done in about 10 years in this assembly: the review of an actual government agency. You see, we have this committee called the government agencies and appointments committee, and half of its mandate is to review agencies of the government. It hasn't done that in 10 years. As a result of some negotiations and discussions amongst ourselves as New Democrats, the government and the official opposition, we finally agreed that it would be a good idea to do a review. So we had the Ontario lottery corporation come before a committee and answer questions as to some of their practices.

One of the things that I thought was really interesting is that when the Conservative caucus raised the issue of \$6 million being spent by the lottery corporation to change its branding—they spent \$6 million by using a high-priced ad firm to do so—I asked a number of questions, and one of the questions I asked the chair was, "First of all, isn't this agency governed by Bill 8, the French Language Services Act?" The answer was yes. I said, "You spent \$6 million to review changing your logo, and it's not even bilingual?" I thought, "Why did we spend \$6 million if we didn't ask that as a basic question?" We all know that agencies of the province are governed by Bill 8, and you would think, at the very least, that their logo would reflect that within the work they did. What was more surprising was the response of the chair. He was actually surprised: "Oh, my God. It isn't?"

It just made me think, "Well, maybe there's something to this." Maybe there isn't the type of oversight we need at times to make sure that some of the decisions that are made are made in such a way as to make sure that provincial policies are consistently applied to different agencies or ministries when it comes to carrying out their mandates or policies, whatever they might be. So in this particular case, six million bucks spent, and we've changed the logo. And I've got to remember, all they basically did was take the "C" out of "OLGC." They changed the logo and we couldn't even get that right, so I just thought that was kind of interesting.

1650

The other one was the redesign that was done to the trillium logo—same thing. At one point you say to yourself, "We understand that governments, as businesses, have to change and modernize with the times." For example, as a business, you can't always be using the same slogan when you're advertising on television, so I do understand that there's a need to reflect today's society by way of some of the symbols whereby we identify our institutions, but at a time when we're fighting to provide basic services to people in our communities of all types, it just seems to me that some of those expenditures could be better used.

We had, for example, in the Legislature earlier today a whole discussion, as we've been having for the last, I guess, four or five weeks that the House has been back in session, on the issue of the water crisis in our First Nations communities. We all know, as members—we see it, we look at the papers, we see what's going out on the news. If it's not Cat Lake that's in a water crisis, it's Kashechewan; if it's not Kashechewan, it's Marten Falls; if it's not Marten Falls, it's Pikangikum. We know that the federal government has dropped the ball completely when it comes to making sure that the people who live on reserves, our First Nations, have been provided with clean drinking water.

I would like to see some of the money we have actually spent on some of these things, such as the \$6 million to change the logo at the OLGC—use that money in order to be able to augment what the federal government

should be doing by providing good infrastructure when it comes to clean drinking water.

I want to tell you a story. I was talking to Chief Elijah Moonias about two nights ago, the chief of Marten Falls, and here he is, extremely frustrated. It's almost like a Kashechewan all over again, right? He has a lift station in the sewer system that has failed and keeps on failing, and when it backs up it overflows into a creek. Guess where the creek goes? It goes right by the intake of the water plant. What is it with the federal government? Every time they design a water plant, they have to put the intake next to the sewer system. God knows what they're doing. Why do we need to have that? I believe the province can play a role. We're much better at water management and we have much stronger legislation to care for these things—but there's what's happening in his community.

There's been a battle back and forth between the Ministry of Indian and Northern Affairs—we call it "INAC"—and the community to try to get the sewer lift station fixed. When I was talking to him on the phone on Monday or Tuesday night—whatever night it was—Chief Elijah Moonias said, "They've done a temporary fix, and now we're in this paper war trying to figure out how we're going to get this funded in order to do the permanent fix."

I just say to all members in this House and anybody else watching, can you imagine if the sewer lift station in downtown Toronto or Timmins or Sudbury were to fail and we had to wait for the federal government to fix it and to fill out the necessary paperwork to fund it? We'd be sending in the army, as Mel Lastman did when it was snowing in Toronto one day. Mel Lastman called in the army. Boom: We had snowplows out on the street.

It really makes me mad, because these people are First Nations people. They are the first citizens of this country, of this province, and we should treat them with respect. We should provide the type of infrastructure that everybody takes for granted.

But here is his first problem: His first problem is that the federal government is slow to come up with the funds needed in order to fix the lift station. So we have an existing problem that we know continues to fail, is putting people at risk, and here we are in the end of a situation where, yet again, the federal government has dropped the ball. I say to the province, let's become part of the solution. We are in the province of Ontario. We are experts when it comes to drinking water. We have the toughest legislation and regulation in the country—something to be proud of. We have the expertise within the Ministry of the Environment and within the Clean Water Agency to operate and run water plants and to make sure that our operators are well-trained. Why not sit down with the federal government and the First Nations and negotiate a transfer of those responsibilities over to the province, where we're best suited to deal with it?

I want to give you a little analogy. The federal government's capacity to deal with things like water is like having a baseball team without a second bench. It is like going into a baseball game without a reliever. The federal

government is like a nine-person baseball team with maybe one person as a relief, and sometimes that relief is a pitcher; sometimes that relief is a runner or a batter, as need be. They don't have the capacity, the depth of bench, to be able to respond to issues as we do in the province. Why? Because the federal government is not in the water business. They're not in education. That is not their primary mandate. Those are the mandates of the provinces, and that's why I argue that we should use some of the money that is listed in this particular debate as far as some of the millions of dollars that we have wasted in advertising and other things and take that money and say, "Listen: We are prepared, as a province, to sit down with the federal government and our First Nations leaders and say that we are interested in playing a role to solve the problem of clean drinking water in those communities." I think that's something that would be welcomed, certainly by the citizens of our First Nations communities, but also by the leadership and most of the public of Ontario. I think most people understand there are some basic things that we have to do in a society, and, clearly, clean drinking water is one of those. So we've got to get moving in that direction.

As I look at this list, I just look at what we could do: \$6 million to the OLGC, \$219,000 for the trillium, \$20 million in regard to various boards and agencies, \$2 million for partisan advertising, and the list gets stronger. We know they're going to be spending a lot more money on political advertising a little bit later. We would be able to do something very reasonable when it comes to our response and, quite frankly, to do something that would show that Ontario is prepared to put their money where their mouth is.

I know, for example, in the province of Quebec, as in Manitoba and others, those provincial governments play a much stronger role when it comes to helping find solutions for First Nations communities. I just look at the east and west side of the James Bay. I invite anybody to take the road and drive up the east side of the James Bay on the Quebec side and you will get to communities that have paved roads and good infrastructure. It isn't a Cadillac set-up, but it's a heck of a lot better than what we see in Ontario. Here's the point: You can at least drive up the east coast of the James Bay, because there is a road. On the Ontario side, you don't even have a road. You've got to go on a winter road in the winter when it's frozen or you've got to go by barge or plane. How are you able to function in communities in that kind of set-up? All I'm saying is the province has got to become part of the solution.

I want to say I see my good friend the member from Hamilton Centre, East or whatever riding it is, up there, Madam Horwath, with her son and her friend. I say hello and welcome to the Legislature. I hope you have learned something about what mom does when she comes to work here every day. She's not going to be here tomorrow. She's going to be doing some other things and we're going to miss her terribly, just to let her know. I just thought I'd do that to embarrass her. I didn't know what I was going to say about her, but I said something.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): Good-looking kid.

Mr. Bisson: Yes, just like my children. It's amazing how our children grow up and look better than their parents. I don't know what happened there, but anyway, that's kind of the story.

Interjection.

Mr. Bisson: Well, it's true. If I bring both my daughters, Julie and Natalie, in here, you wouldn't believe they're my kids, because they're a lot better-looking than I'm ever going to be or ever was. Anyway, I'm digressing.

I want to come back to the point of what we can be doing, rather than spending money on partisan political advertising or changing logos or whatever, and that is, we could be taking a look, for example, in my area at how we're able to assist those communities that have been decimated by job losses, specifically in the forest industry across northeastern and northwestern Ontario. You've seen the list. We've all seen the debates. Communities like Smooth Rock Falls, Kapuskasing, Hearst, Constance Lake, Opasatika, Chapleau, Timmins, all of them have been affected by downturns in the forestry sector, and it's been really tough.

For example, we've been dealing with Minister Ramsay on one particular issue now for the better part of six months, and that is to provide emergency assistance to the northern corridor assessment services so that those employees who are being laid off and have been laid off are able to get counselling services when it comes to credit management and substance abuse, some of those things that happen once a person is not working anymore.

To date, the government has not provided any emergency assistance to that particular organization. We know—and I'm talking to Lawrence Stenabaugh, who's the president of that particular organization—that there is a 25% increase in demand, because there are a lot of unemployed workers who have turned to the bottle, who are having financial problems, and it's manifesting itself in their family lives. So we would say, imagine if we just took a part of some of the savings that are in this motion. We're talking about \$219,000 to redesign the Ontario trillium logo. Well, \$219,000 to the workers on the Highway 11 corridor, which is in both Mr. Ramsay's riding and my riding, would go a long way to respond to the problems that the north corridor assessment services have seen as a result of the loss of employment within their particular industry. So I say we could probably put that money to better use.

We take a look at what's happening to those communities as far as employment opportunities. We all want a strong economy so that people are able to live with dignity and young people growing up in our communities, specifically in the north, are able to stay there once they've finished school and done college or university, and are able to get employment in their fields. But it's becoming more difficult because there is a lack of vision, I would argue, on the part of both provincial and federal governments to really respond to the economies of northern Ontario and, I would argue, the rural

economy generally. This is not just a northern Ontario issue. Part of the problem, I think, is that we are very urban-centred in our outlooks. I'm not saying that's wrong, that we shouldn't pay attention to Toronto and Hamilton and larger municipalities—they have their particular challenges too and they need the attention of both the federal and provincial governments to assist them—but the problem is, it's become basically the dominant factor in the debate about how and what a government can do in order to assist a particular region.

1700

Somebody pointed out the other day something that I've always known, but it's always interesting for debate, and that is, if you look at how many members come from urban centres as compared to rural areas, it's like night and day. Probably two thirds of members now come from urban centres across Ontario—Thunder Bay, Sudbury, Toronto and others. About 75% of our members come from those cities. There is a smaller percentage of people now who come from rural centres, and it's a complete reversal. It used to be at one time that a majority of members came from rural Ontario, and as a result, a lot of the policies reflected that. The government tried to do things to assist those economies in rural Ontario to grow and prosper. As a result, we've had the successes of Sudbury, Sault Ste. Marie, Thunder Bay—those areas that used to be small communities that, with the assistance of government, have been able to transform themselves.

I look at Sudbury. My good friend Breanna who's from Kapuskasing might remember some of this, and that is, Sudbury went through huge downturns. Well, you might not remember. This was in the 1970s. I'm dating myself. But in the 1970s, Sudbury went through huge downturns in their economy because of what was happening in mining. Inco alone went from over 20,000 workers down to less than 5,000. The governments could have said, "Well, we're not going to look at that. We're just going to let que sera sera happen." Instead, the federal and provincial governments stepped up to the plate. We invested in training, we invested in infrastructure, we assisted in economic development. We transferred entire ministries to that community. The taxation revenue centre in Sudbury employs—I don't know how many people—close to a thousand people, I understand. The Ministry of Northern Development and Mines relocated to that community. We did things as governments to support that community. As a result, it is a vibrant, successful community today. Sudbury, I would say, is one of the models we should probably look at more closely as to what can be done in other parts.

Imagine if we were to take that approach to communities like Kapuskasing or Hearst or Timmins or Kirkland Lake or Atikokan or Fort Frances or Kenora or wherever it might be—or, I would argue, Cornwall or some of the other communities in southwestern or southeastern or central Ontario—and we were to say, "We as a provincial government—and we would encourage the federal government to work with us—are going

to put in place a strategy by which we are going to put efforts into making sure that all parts of the Ontario economy are able to benefit and grow.” If we were able to do that, well, at the end of the day, we’re all winners, because it means our economy would be stronger, there would be less reliance on government for assistance when it comes to social assistance or unemployment or welfare or whatever it might be, and we would be creating net worth within our economies that, at the end, would generate taxes for the government.

I guess this is where I depart from my friends in the Conservative caucus. Their approach has been—and if you look at this particular motion, this is where they’re going—that all a government has to do to assist communities to survive and to strive is to cut taxes and get out of the way. Well, I disagree. If government gets out of the way, I’ll tell you what will happen: absolutely nothing. I have an opportunity, as we all do, to speak at schools when we’re back in our ridings. I always start my debate with the students when I go into the grade 5s and grade 10s and others to speak about government by saying, “Who here would like not to pay taxes?” And everybody puts their hand up. There’s not one person who doesn’t have their hand up, who says they want to pay taxes. And I say, “Okay. We’ll have a little exercise here, and the exercise is, we’re going to have a vote. The vote is, those who want to stop paying taxes, put your hands up, vote yes”—they all put their hands up—“those no”—hardly anybody puts their hand up. I say, “Fine. As of today, you pay no taxes. By the way, get out of the school or give me a cheque. Your mom is sick, your dad is sick, your grandfather needs a doctor and needs to go to the hospital. Bring your credit card, because that’s what the alternative is.”

This is where I have a big difference with Mr. Tory and the Conservative caucus. They couch the language of prosperity—we all believe all regions of Ontario should be prosperous when it comes to the economy—with discussions around, “Oh, we’ve got to get out of the way of business and allow business to flourish.” All right. So we’re going to let business do what it wants: pollute our rivers and creeks and lakes, basically infringe on other people around them? We’re not going to be interested in those particular activities? Of course not; government has a role to play in order to assist business to strive.

For example, I see my good friend the Minister of Northern Development and Mines here, and he would know as well as I do that one of the issues for us in northern Ontario is transportation. All of our industries that are located in northern Ontario have a much higher cost than it is in other parts of the province to transport their goods to and from market: bring raw materials in to do whatever it is you are going to do and transport them out as finished materials. Government has got to be there to provide road infrastructure, rail infrastructure, ways of being able to reduce the distance and cost to transport goods—not so much the distance, but the cost is what I talk about.

I say to my friends in the Conservative caucus, I agree with part of what’s in your motion because I too believe

as a New Democrat that fiscally we have to be responsible; we have to spend our money where we’re going to get the biggest bang for our buck. I agree with the Conservative caucus: The Liberals spending money on partisan political advertising is going to do absolutely nothing to help the members in our First Nations communities to get water or people in rural or northern Ontario to get economic development opportunities.

I agree with them on that point, but it’s not by saying we’re going to eliminate taxes that that’s going to happen. I want to propose something else. I was at a debate with the chamber of commerce a little while back—it was earlier this fall, in September—and somebody made that point and they said, “The problem with the government of Ontario is that they’re not providing tax cuts in order to make business flourish. If only the government could provide minimal tax relief, I guarantee you the economy would be booming here.” I reminded you then that the federal Conservative government had just reduced taxes and we still had problems because, at the end of the day, tax cuts are not necessarily the stimulus that people think they are when it comes to economic development. What are stimuli are programs that are specifically earmarked in order to get a certain result out of the money invested. Training, I believe, is a huge one.

I had the opportunity, as we all do, to visit employers in our ridings, and I’m told, over and over again, as I go into small manufacturing companies or I go into the service industry, that apprenticeship training, training in order to bring workers up to a standard so that they’re a value to their employers, is a huge cost of doing business, and for the small employer it’s a real problem because once they’re trained, they move on to the bigger operators. For example, somebody will go work in a plant, let’s say in Mattice, where they do the transformation of wood to a value-added product, and then all of a sudden the person’s trained and they get a job working somewhere else, let’s say at Tembec or Grant waferboard or wherever it might be. It’s a problem. We need to socialize the cost of training so that it’s not entirely borne by the employer or the employee. I think that’s one of the places you have to invest.

We really need to put in place strategies that look at communication and transportation so that we lessen the distances in Ontario when it comes to doing business, so that you’re not competing with an unfair advantage. Somebody said to me at a chamber of commerce annual meeting that I went to about a year ago, “You talk about subsidizing transportation in northern Ontario.” I said, “What’s wrong with the concept?” He says, “That’s crazy. Nobody would do that.” I said, “Highway 401 is a public highway. It’s paid for by the taxpayers of Ontario. It is completely subsidized and it is the link that connects operators of plants from Windsor all the way to Cornwall. You think that’s not subsidized?” If the 401 wasn’t there, the economy of southern Ontario wouldn’t work. We don’t think twice about investing money and making a better Highway 401 and other important roads in order to allow business to prosper.

So I argue, in northern Ontario we don't need to only invest in roads and rail, but we need to find ways of reducing costs of transportation, and I believe we have to look at differential costs on fuel. We have to do something maybe around fuel taxes as an opportunity. We have to look at Ontario Northland: probably need a higher subsidy. If we're going to be able to provide transportation infrastructures for industry along the ONR, the ACR and other lines—and maybe we need to look at expanding that—we need to provide a subsidy. There's not an economy in the world that operates a train system without subsidizing it, and there's a reason we do that.

I say to my friends on the opposition benches, I agree with some of the things that you have in this particular motion. I agree with you that, at the end, we should be frugal in the way that we spend our dollars. We should be very—how would I say—strong about how we're going to spend dollars and clear on what we want to do. I think a lot of the expenses that you have here are expenses that I agree could have been done differently as far as savings.

I look forward to the rest of the debate and I look forward to what people have to say about this.

1710

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): It certainly is my pleasure to rise today and set the record straight, as we say around our area. I've got to say, you know, that to sit here and listen to the allegations from the opposite side of the House about transparency, fiscal responsibility, on and on—the words roll out of their mouths. I hear that, and when we took over government there was a \$5.6-billion deficit. What are they thinking? Do they not remember? I can't imagine how you can come and say things like this. And it wasn't just the \$5.6 billion; it was the deficit we had in our social structure, the deficit we had in our health care structure, the deficit we had in our health infrastructure as well.

When we hear, time after time, speaker after speaker, the allegations that are made, it is just absolutely ludicrous to me, with their checkered history, their fiscal disclosure, their transparency. It's absolutely preposterous.

I want to add even more than that. There have been a lot of comments made about rural communities and the McGuinty government. The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, for one, talked about the Clean Water Act. There seems to be some concern from that side of the House that the Clean Water Act—in their minds, you can vote against it and still be in favour of clean water. Do you know what? You can't. A plus B does not equal C, and they know it. And they committed to it during their election platform; they committed to the recommendations from the Walkerton inquiry. But that was then and this is now, and that's how it goes.

The other thing I want to say too is that the dollars that were allocated to the Clean Water Act—we understand it's a local solution and they're working through those numbers. But I want to remind the other side of the House about the Nutrient Management Act. I know they don't like to talk about that because of how difficult it

was. But how much money was committed from that side of the House for nutrient management? I can tell you, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London–Fanshawe): How much?

Mrs. Mitchell: Zip. Nothing. They've forgotten that part too.

For the rest of my time, I want to talk not only from the province of Ontario's perspective but specifically about the riding of Huron–Bruce and how different it is today. One of the speakers, from Durham, talked about, is it better today? Do you know what? It is better today. It is. The people of Ontario say things are better today. That's the test. You've said that before, and it was something you said after the budget. I can tell you what I'm hearing in rural Ontario. What's the test? The test is, are things better today? And the answer is, they absolutely are.

It's not just in education—smaller class sizes—it's in health care. I remind the members from the other side that I come from a community called Clinton, and they were closing our hospital. The turmoil that caused within my community is something that will stay with me all my life. I know that the opposite side, when they ran for government—everybody remembers: “We will not touch health care,” and “We will not touch education.” Do you remember? And then what happened? Well, you know what: first cut, health care; second cut, education. The next thing you know, there are hospitals closing all over the place. That was the commitment to rural Ontario.

Until you've gone through something like that in your community, when what you rely on for health care is taken away—I want to add too that this wasn't the first government that tried to take away our hospital. They were the second Conservative government that tried to take away our hospital. It was the father of one of the members who came at that time to do that job. It didn't happen then, and that was good work that was done in all of our communities.

But all the investment we have made collectively throughout the province of Ontario—you know, \$30 billion for infrastructure.

When I think about all that has been needed for us to move forward as a province: Ontario is a very proud province and we are all so pleased to be a part of the future of Ontario. But Ontario can only go forward with roads you can drive on, bridges you can cross over on. We have to be able to provide adequate health care, we have to be able to provide adequate education if we're looking to the future, which the McGuinty government is. They have a clear focus on what is needed and what we need to move forward. That infrastructure is being replaced; it's being enhanced. Quite honestly, if the previous government had had a better handle on what the people of Ontario need to move forward, we would not have such a backlog of work that is required today.

In Move Ontario, just specifically in the riding of Huron–Bruce, \$11 million came to the riding for roads in one year. What did the previous government do with the

roads? They downloaded the roads, roads that were in ill repair, on to rural communities that weren't able to pay for them. That was just one of a series of the many services that were downloaded over the years. So when I hear from the opposite side of the House about accountability, transparency, we're all of that and we've made a commitment. The people of Ontario understand what it's going to take to get this proud province back and in the proper place within all of Canada, and that's to lead.

We can be proud of the work that we have done, and we are. But we also understand that you can't leave things for so long and expect to get caught up in a short time. We recognize that, and that's why the investments have been there and they will come forward. But if we hadn't had a party who slashed and burned policies, we would not have to do so much good work that is needed throughout the province.

When we come forward with a fiscal package, we bring on our business community as well so that they have an understanding of where we are going, what is needed and how they can be a part of that. That clearly is being demonstrated every day within the province.

I wish I had more time. This is something that I certainly have been very passionate about: the commitment we have made to rural Ontario. I just want to say: \$910 million to our agricultural community for income stabilization. I know that there is hurt out in the agricultural community. There isn't one member who does not recognize that. We have come so far in what we have done to give the tools to the agricultural community to move forward through renewables, through income stabilization. We've done it; we've been there. Where was the previous government when pork prices were tanking? They were tanking.

It's abundantly clear to all the members of this House that any accusation of wrongdoing by the official opposition should be taken with a grain of salt. It should be just as clear to everyone that the McGuinty government is striving to renew the province's infrastructure and give its sense of integrity back to Ontario.

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): This resolution raises one of the fundamental responsibilities that we have as elected representatives. Of course, I'm referring to the way the current provincial government demonstrates absolute disregard for the revenues received by the treasury, and the Legislature, being vigilant in its oversight responsibility, questioning whether the government of the day is making wise and democratically accountable expenditures. This is without a doubt one of the most important roles played by members of the Ontario Legislature.

Hardworking families pay their taxes to the government. These families have every right to expect that their tax dollars will be put to the best possible use for the best possible education, health care, safe streets and homes, environmental protection and transportation services, to name but a few. All of these things are needed to sustain and improve our economy and our quality of life. Taxpayers rightly expect and deserve a government that is

accountable. For a government to be accountable, it must be trusted. It must never, ever waste public dollars or spend recklessly or frivolously. In short, Ontario's families deserve truth and integrity in the management of the province's finances. In reality, on this measure, McGuinty Liberal government is tragically failing to meet the expectations of the people of Ontario.

1720

I ask members of this House to look back to a little over three years ago and again picture Dalton McGuinty, running to be Premier at that time, gazing into the camera and promising that he would not raise taxes. Then, in their first budget, the McGuinty Liberal government brought in the biggest tax increase in the province's history. To say the least, he broke faith with Ontario voters and, since then, taxpayers have to be cynical about the McGuinty government's motives as they pertain to our public finances.

The people in Waterloo region, Wellington county and the town of Halton Hills know that, with over 50 broken promises and a lack of any real, concrete plan for Ontario's future, the government of Dalton McGuinty will say anything to get power and continue muddling through any way they can to hold on to it. As our leader, the member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey, demonstrated with this list of hundreds of millions of dollars of wasteful spending, the McGuinty government has now become bogged down by their own mismanagement, waste and, ultimately, by the politically charged motives behind almost all of their public actions. They are very good at photo ops but they are good at little else.

The Ontario Liberal Party can't seem to resist wasting money. Consider their convention in Toronto last weekend. According to the *Toronto Star*, the Ontario Liberal Party paid about C\$65,000 to an American political strategist, James Carville, for an 18-minute speech advising the Liberal Party how to use American-style political tactics in the coming provincial election. Mr. Carville, a Democratic Party operative in the United States, is known for his bare-knuckles, take-no-prisoners, nasty personal attacks, which may have inspired the Ontario Liberals' failed approach in the Parkdale-High Park by-election. In any case, I would expect that any supporter of the Ontario Liberal Party who has recently written a cheque to the Ontario Liberal fund or any of their riding associations would have to wonder why the party they support is wasting their money on a questionable expenditure like this.

As we all know, financial donations to political parties in Ontario are eligible for a generous tax credit of up to 75% of the donation, which means in practice that, to a substantial degree, taxpayers' money assists in the financing of our election campaigns. So it's taxpayers' money we're talking about. If the government votes this motion down, as I suspect they may, they will once again be demonstrating their callous disregard for taxpayers' money and giving the voters of Ontario one more reason to send them back to the opposition benches in 11 months' time.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): In the time that I have this afternoon for this debate, I want to focus on the government's autism budget. I want to express my dismay, my frustration and my criticism that every dollar that was announced for the autism budget was in fact not spent on autism initiatives. What a waste that has been in light of the huge number of autistic children languishing on waiting lists, desperate for IBI treatments.

If you take a look—and we have, because we have made a number of freedom-of-information requests to the Ministry of Children and Youth Services to get at the numbers—it's interesting to look at the expenditures versus what was announced under the Liberal government. I want to begin in 2003-04, the last six months of the fiscal year that the Liberals were in power. In that year, the total budget announced for autism initiatives was \$80 million, but at the end of the fiscal year it was discovered that about \$2.6 million of that went to other children's programs within the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, another \$1.5 million was diverted to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, and \$32 million—\$32 million—was returned, unspent, to the consolidated revenue fund.

In 2004-05, the total budget that was announced for autism by this government was \$89 million. At the end of the fiscal year, \$21.5 million was spent on other children's programs within the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. In the last fiscal year, 2005-06, the government did better—after three years. Of the \$99 million that was announced for autism, about \$1.5 million returned to the consolidated revenue fund. Over the three years that the Liberals have been in power, the \$55 million that was announced for autism initiatives was either unspent or diverted to other programs within the ministry or to other ministries.

I want you to contrast that against the wait list for IBI treatment, because it is very telling. Speaker, you will know—because you've dealt with families in your own riding, some of whom have been here more than once, whose children are waiting for IBI service—that IBI is one of the most effective treatments for autistic children that has come about. It is clear that the government made some very significant promises to parents of autistic children in the last election, promises that included ending the discrimination against children over the age of six who had autism and who needed IBI treatment.

It's important to point out that the only reason the government actually ended that discrimination was because of a court ruling by Justice Kitley in April 1995, where in her decision she said very publicly that the Ontario government was violating the charter rights of Ontario's autistic children by discriminating against them, both on the basis of their age and their disability. She also went on to say in her decision, which was an excellent decision after over a year of hearing the arguments on both sides, that this government's Ministry and Minister of Education were violating the Education Act, because the minister was failing to ensure that children could get access to special education programs without

having to pay a fee for it. She was particularly critical of the Minister of Education and in her decision actually said that he had in fact imposed barriers on children, autistic children in particular, who needed very specific supports in the classroom and weren't getting them. She was extremely critical of this government. The point is, it was only because of that particular ruling, which was a charter ruling, that the government was finally forced to keep the promise it had made over 13 months before, during the election campaign, to end the discrimination of children over the age of six.

If you look at what else the government promised, it was to provide treatment to these children. It really is worth the time and effort to put on the record the waiting lists for that same treatment, because, frankly, under this government, that waiting list has grown enormously. At the end of March 2003—this was under the Conservatives—there were 76 children waiting for IBI treatment. These are children, I remind you, who had already gone through assessments, who had already been deemed to have autism on the spectrum severe enough to qualify for the IBI program. So 76 children were on the wait list at the end of March 2003. At the end of March 2004, there were 89 children waiting for IBI treatment. The Liberals had been in government for about six months now. At the end of March 2005, 399 children were waiting for IBI treatment. We're seeing a significant increase in that particular fiscal year. But by the end of March 2006, there were 753 children waiting for IBI treatment—753 children who have been assessed, who have been deemed to qualify for this program because their autism is so severe; 753 kids languishing on a waiting list, desperate for IBI treatment.

Why is it, or better yet, how could it be that in the face of those huge numbers of children languishing on a waiting list, this government, over a three-year period, could ever have underspent or diverted \$55 million from the autism budget to other initiatives?

1730

I don't understand why the government, looking at the waiting lists in the same way we were seeing the waiting lists grow, didn't ensure that every penny of the autism budget was spent and that within the autism budget itself, if there was underspending in some certain initiatives, the government would then divert that money directly into the IBI treatment program. That didn't happen, and today we have 753 kids sitting on a list waiting for treatment, and we have a government that underspent in this program by \$55 million. What a waste. What an incredible waste.

This year alone, in the money that went unspent, you probably could have had another 30 families receive IBI treatment. That's significant, Speaker, because as you and I know, it is incredibly difficult, if not impossible, for families to fund IBI treatment on their own. For a child who receives IBI at 40 hours a week—and that, regrettably, is what is required for a child who is severe on the spectrum—over a year, the cost runs in the order of \$50,000 to \$60,000. It's clear that at \$50,000 to \$60,000

there aren't many parents in Ontario who could ever afford to fund that out of their own pockets, despite their various efforts to finance their house, refinance their house, borrow money from their families, have fundraisers and the whole nine yards. You can't sustain that level of funding of treatment out of your own pocket for very long.

So it is imperative that if these kids are ever going to get treatment, they get it through the government program, because it is the rare parent, the rare family, in Ontario who can afford to fund this treatment all on their own.

I was at an autism rally in Sudbury in the last couple of weeks and had a chance to speak to a number of parents, some of whom are getting IBI treatment for their children finally, after waiting a long time on a waiting list, and some who aren't. One in particular, Tina Lendrum, talked to me. They had just finished a fundraiser in the Metis community about a month before to try to raise money for IBI because she and her husband are trying to fund, out of their own pocket, a program for their child. It certainly isn't a 40-hour-a-week program, because they can't afford to pay the therapist to do that. But they do have a limited program in place, and they're trying to fund that out of their own pocket. There was a fundraising effort in the Metis community to help them out. I said to myself, how is it that in Ontario in 2006, when the government had a \$3-billion surplus in its last budget in March, that we force families of autistic children into a position when, literally, their community has to have a fundraising effort in order to pay for the treatment that their autistic child so desperately needs? How is it that \$55 million over the last three years could have gone unspent or was diverted to other programs by this government instead of ensuring that every penny, every dime, of money that was left over in the autism budget actually went to treatment, especially in the face of the waiting lists, which are growing by leaps and bounds?

We can pay for IBI now or we can not give IBI to kids and we can pay later, because these kids will end up in trouble with the law, will end up in group homes, will end up in institutions. We should be making the investment now because, after all, that was actually the promise that Dalton McGuinty made to the parents of autistic children in the last election when he asked for their vote.

Let's make sure from now on every cent goes into this treatment program.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): I certainly want to stand in support of this motion on government waste. The list is so long that we could be here until the cows come home, as they say. But I'm going to concentrate on just one issue today, and that is the \$6 million to remove the "C" from OLGC. I've heard the minister talk about how that was a good investment. That was a good investment because it's going to improve the efficiencies and improve the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. Hooey. Goodness gracious, spending \$6 million to take a letter out of a logo. There's only one

reason that was done, and that was because Dalton McGuinty wanted to hand the cheque over to his buddies over at Bensimon Byrne. That's why that was done—not because it was going to do anything positive for the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp.—not at all—but because it was going to fulfill a commitment Dalton McGuinty made to his friends over at Bensimon Byrne to make sure that some of the Ontario taxpayers' money got into their pockets through a contract that is questionable at best—over \$20 million for this company now, and a retainer of \$78,000 a month just to be there.

That's the same company that did those ads when Dalton McGuinty stood up and faced Ontarians in the last provincial election and said, "I won't raise your taxes." This is what he does to the taxpayers, and that's what he does for his friends. Six million dollars—that's just the beginning of it. Bensimon Byrne's trademark is going to be on every little thing that comes out of here.

What about this advertising campaign? Thirty-one million dollars in the budget is being spent this year to promote partisan advertising on the part of the McGuinty government. Shame on them. Shame on them telling us about, "The doctor is in. The doctor will see you now." I'll tell you, when I go around rural Ontario, I know lots of places where the doctor's not in and they're worried if the doctor's going to be coming in, because you know what? Those doctors are getting older and some of them are retiring, and this government is not doing anything to address the doctor shortage across this province.

Yes, they threw out some emergency money cash last week—we'll see when it flows—to get the media off the subject for now, but the fact is, you've got to deal with those situations and you've got to deal with them now.

I'm going to pass this on to my colleague from York North.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The member from Peterborough.

Mr. Leal: I only have a minute today, but one of the things I'd like to talk about is the \$5.5-billion deficit that was left in 2003 that has always been the backdrop of the kind of challenges we've faced in government. It was interesting that the Progressive Conservative Party always denied that that deficit existed, but we had to call in Erik Peters, the very distinguished former Auditor General of Ontario, to verify that indeed that \$5.5-billion deficit was there. But through prudent financial management over the last three years, we've been able to reduce that deficit significantly and make key investments in the health care field.

Interestingly enough, the Fraser Institute, that bible that I know the members of the Progressive Conservative caucus read before they go to bed each night to find out what's going on in the right-wing Republican world that they believe in, certainly indicated that wait times are the lowest in the province of Ontario, verifying that in fact the investments we've made in that sector are reducing wait times in the five key areas that are so important to people throughout the province of Ontario, but particularly in my riding of Peterborough, where they're

seeing the positive impact of having that investment in wait times.

I want my friend from Scarborough to pick up from here.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The member from York North.

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): In the few moments I have, I would just like, in support of this opposition day motion, to speak to a couple of issues.

One is the fact that this government has undertaken very, very expensive change without, I believe, due regard for the creation of better service, and I'm talking about the CCACs. It's estimated that the cost is going to be close to \$100 million, and that \$100 million is on issues with regard to the severances of \$50 million, \$14 million in legal costs and \$25 million in wage harmonization. None of that speaks to the issue of providing better service. It seems to me, when you're looking at much larger areas, that you're going to see a reduction in local control.

The other point that I think is important to put on the record is that many of the government speakers this afternoon referred to the deficit in 2003 in a way to suggest that it was a surprise. Well, in fact, they need go no further than their own member Gerry Phillips, who recognized the fact that this was a budget that would require some adjustment. This Liberal government made no effort to meet the kinds of challenges we had faced.

1740

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I'm delighted to join in this debate on what is something I would describe as a typical opposition day motion. It starts off with a phrase that we all could support. Of course we want to spend money wisely. Then it goes on to name a litany of what Tories would consider to be unnecessary spending that has taken place, all of which, one by one, if I were to have the time to go through them, could be ably refuted, all of which are factually wrong, taken out of context and/or grossly exaggerated.

That being said, I've been in public office now for 12 years. I've worked at all three levels of government and I haven't seen a government anywhere—in fact, I haven't seen an organization, be they profit, non-profit or private sector—that's perfect when it comes to managing spending. I can tell you that we're not claiming to be perfect, but we're very, very vigilant and the Premier is very, very vigilant in doing everything we can to ensure that Ontario residents are getting value for money. That's the key: getting value for money. That's what the hard-working people of Ontario deserve. That's what the hard-working people of Ontario demand. That's what the McGuinty government is delivering to the hard-working people of Ontario.

After eight years, the people of Ontario saw a Tory government that managed over unprecedented labour unrest. From teachers to public servants, nobody was happy. They devastated our public services. There was a lack of long-term vision when it came to infrastructure investment. They just didn't get the fact that you have to

invest long-term to get good economic prosperity and quality of life. The municipalities across this province were punished by downloading year after year. After all of that, what did we get for it? We ended up with a hidden, secretive, \$5.6-billion deficit that our government had to start off with, in the hole. What was that in the name of? Was it in the name of savings that would put the books of the province in good stead? No, it was in the name of tax cuts, something that didn't help the economy, something that didn't contribute to our quality of life.

The McGuinty government is going in the exact opposite direction. We're working with public servants here in this province. We're rebuilding public services from one end of this province to the other, right throughout the entire Ontario government. We're making sure that the people of this province are getting good services and that they're getting value for the money they invest in this government.

We're also taking a long-term vision on infrastructure. We're investing like never before across this province in public transit, roads and bridges, schools, universities and colleges, hospitals and housing, something the previous government never believed in and never thought was important to them. These are things that the Tories neglected in the name of tax cuts. They did this at the expense of our quality of life; they did it at the expense of our economic prosperity.

We're also uploading municipal costs across the province. Whether it be for public transit, whether it be for public health, whether it be land ambulance, whether it be investing in housing across the province, we're uploading. All of these are investments that are being uploaded, not downloaded like the Tories used to do.

After inheriting that Tory \$5.6-billion hidden deficit, we're working our way out of that hole. We're more than halfway there now and we're well on the way to eliminating that Tory deficit. On top of all that, we've managed to invest heavily in the people of this province.

Our health care system is improving, our education system is improving, and we're investing strategically in our economy to ensure that we're protecting and enhancing the ability of our people in this province to find work. We're providing value for money. We're building a strong and vibrant province with a quality of life second to none and an economic prosperity agenda that is absolutely second to none across North America, and we're being recognized across North America for doing that. Behind that, and I suspect it probably doesn't get the publicity it deserves, is the hard work being done by people like the Honourable Gerry Phillips, our Minister of Government Services. He's making provincial government more transparent and accountable.

I don't have a lot of time, but let me give you at least one example; I've got many. Let's look at the birth certificate situation. The Tories and the NDP laughed at us when we said we were going to clean that up. We've put them online—

Mr. Leal: Money-back guarantee.

Mr. Duguid: —and we have a money-back guarantee.

Of 250,000 applications, only 100 missed the 15-day deadline. That's a fraction of the time that under the management of the previous government it was taking, a fraction of the time. That's being creative. That's being innovative. That's delivering good-quality public services at a good, effective cost and getting value for taxpayers' money.

Let me give you another example. Our auditor now has the power to examine the broader public sector. That's going to help us find savings.

Let me give you another example. We've banned partisan government advertising. That doesn't mean we don't communicate to the people of Ontario. It doesn't mean we don't advertise at all, but we've banned partisan public advertising, as we said we would.

Let me give you another example. The auditor must now sign off on the province's books prior to the next general election. Never again in the future of this province will a Tory government be able to get into office—they may not get into office at all ever again, but if they ever do, they'll never again be able to secretly leave us with a deficit the size of \$5.6 billion. Never again will that happen, and let's hope for the future of this province that they never get back into office again because of the mess that they left us with.

Let me give you another example. Instead of spending hundreds of millions of dollars on outside consultants, we're saving \$20 million a year by utilizing the good services, the good skills, the good abilities of our fine public servants here in this province.

We're doing government well. We're improving public service. We're doing government better than they ever did. We're getting better value for money. The people in this province recognize it.

Interjections.

Mr. Duguid: They may not recognize it.

The people of Ontario recognize it, and we're very, very proud of the job we're doing.

The Acting Speaker: The time for debate has now expired.

Mr. Tory has moved opposition day motion number 2. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

There are more than five members standing. Call in the members. There will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1747 to 1757.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour will please stand and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Amott, Ted
Chudleigh, Ted
Hudak, Tim
MacLeod, Lisa
Martiniuk, Gerry

Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill
O'Toole, John
Runciman, Robert W.

Scott, Laurie
Tory, John
Yakubski, John

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed, please stand and be recorded.

Nays

Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bradley, James J.
Brotten, Laurel C.
Brownell, Jim
Bryant, Michael
Cansfield, Donna H.
Caplan, David
Colle, Mike
Craitor, Kim
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Di Cocco, Caroline

Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Gerretsen, John
Hoy, Pat
Jeffrey, Linda
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Marsales, Judy
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol

Mossop, Jennifer F.
Oraziotti, David
Patten, Richard
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Qadri, Shafiq
Ramal, Khalil
Ramsay, David
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Monique
Van Bommel, Maria
Watson, Jim
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 13; the nays are 48.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

It now being 6 o'clock, this House stands recessed until 6:45.

The House adjourned at 1800.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. James K. Bartleman

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. Brown

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (L) Speaker / Président	Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Scott, Laurie (PC)
Ancaster-Dundas- Flamborough-Aldershot	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC) Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Hamilton East / Hamilton-Est	Horwath, Andrea (ND)
Beaches-East York / Beaches-York-Est	Prue, Michael (ND)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Hon. / L'hon. Marie (L) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique
Bramalea-Gore-Malton- Springdale	Kular, Kuldip (L)	Hamilton West / Hamilton-Ouest	Marsales, Judy (L)
Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (L) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Dhillon, Vic (L)	Huron-Bruce	Mitchell, Carol (L)
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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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No. 117B

N° 117B

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

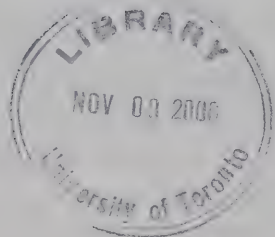
Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 1 November 2006

Mercredi 1^{er} novembre 2006



Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 1 November 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 1^{er} novembre 2006

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES ACT, 2006 (NO. 2)

LOI DE 2006 SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES (NO 2)

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 31, 2006, on the motion for second reading of Bill 151, An Act to enact various 2006 Budget measures and to enact, amend or repeal various Acts / *Projet de loi 151, Loi édictant diverses mesures énoncées dans le Budget de 2006 et édictant, modifiant ou abrogeant diverses lois.*

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Last night I had the opportunity to withdraw a comment that I made in the House, and I apologize to the members for the comment I made.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The member for—

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): Mississauga West.

The Deputy Speaker: —Mississauga West. I don't know why that escaped me.

Mr. Delaney: Thank you very much, Speaker.

We're here to debate Bill 151, an act to enact budget measures, but the moment is just too rich to ignore. This morning's *Globe and Mail* headline simply screams, "Tories break key election promise with sudden distribution tax..."—a tax—and shows Jim Flaherty, the former member for Whitby–Ajax, looking for all the world like a deer caught in the headlights.

Bill 151, the Budget Measures Act, is an exercise that shows how a real government that represents real people coping with real issues makes real choices and delivers real, positive change in real time.

Bill 151 is part of a process that is doing for Ontario what 13 years of Liberal government did for Ottawa. Tory governments spend money, rack up deficits and leave behind an ocean of debt. Bill 151 is a step that continues the steady march forward to good fiscal management in the province of Ontario. In Ottawa, a Liberal government took the responsibility of government from a Conservative Party that had mismanaged Canadians' money, run up \$300 billion in deficits on their watch and left Canadians the legacy of a \$600-billion long-term debt.

In Ontario, a Liberal government took the responsibility of government from a rudderless Conservative Party that had mismanaged Ontarians' money, run up some \$25 billion in accumulated budget deficits and left Ontarians with a \$130-billion long-term debt.

Bill 151, the Budget Measures Act, is another step that shows to Ontarians that after Conservatives have mismanaged the economy, run up debt and hidden deficits, Liberal governments fix it up, run the economy professionally, balance the budgets and pay down debt.

The many forward-looking measures implemented in Bill 151, the Budget Measures Act, show Ontarians with crystal clarity that Conservatives just can't be trusted with money. Ontarians agree, and poll after poll has shown that by this time next year Ontarians will be looking forward to our government's fifth budget and that an education minister, the member for Don Valley West, will be implementing Ontario's ambitious capital program throughout our 72 school boards. And a year from now people will be asking, "Whatever happened to that PC candidate who finished a distant second in the 2007 election? Who was that PC candidate who ran in 2007 in the riding of Don Valley West and finished a distant second?"

1850

Bill 151 is an act that continues to deliver hope and results to hard-working Ontario families. Bill 151's property and sales tax credits say to the men and women who built communities, built neighbourhoods, homes, families and careers in places like Streetsville, Meadowvale and Erin Mills that in their sunset years they can stay in their homes as long as they're able. Enhancements to Ontario's property and sales tax credits and Ontario's child care supplement mean that the working families in newer neighbourhoods like Lisgar and Churchill Meadows will be able to build great communities and deliver safe and secure living spaces in their time.

By the way, is anybody wondering about that trivia question: Who was that candidate who finished second in Don Valley West in 2007? Well, that would be John Tory.

Churchill Meadows alone is celebrating the opening of not just one or two but three new schools in just more than a year—three. Let's contrast that with a Tory government that in its day called a moratorium on the building of new schools. The former education minister, who later became known in our community as "the member from Oklahoma," made his mark when he declared that his approach to education was to, again to use his

own words, "create a crisis in public education." The people who sent him here were so repelled by that government that one of their many changes of mind three years ago was to show his party the door all across Peel region and send me here in his place.

A year from now, the former PC member from Mississauga West can tell the former PC candidate from Don Valley West that a re-entry into the business world is really not that bad, now that Ontario's economy is purring like a finely tuned engine manufactured in one of Ontario's state-of-the-art auto plants—and good on you, Ontario auto workers. This government is getting the job done for you, and there's lots more to come in the future.

Bill 151's aggressive measures to curtail smoking through a toughened Tobacco Tax Act are having an effect in our community. Having more Ontarians, and especially more of our community's new Canadians, kick the tobacco habit is going to mean less congestion in places such as Credit Valley Hospital in Mississauga West.

This is a government that has shown up, chequebook in hand, for Credit Valley Hospital and for that western Mississauga community that it serves so very well. The Premier came to Credit Valley Hospital with me last year, and we celebrated the hiring of 50 new full-time nurses. The Minister of Health has been out with me numerous times to Credit Valley Hospital. He personally took an interest in finding our community enough money to run our existing three MRI machines for a full 12 hours a day, and our fourth MRI machine is bought, paid for, delivered and installed, and is going to be in full service in just a few weeks, as soon as calibration of the unit is complete.

In the year 2003, I ran on a local commitment to get our western Mississauga community capital funds to expand our world-class Credit Valley Hospital. Next year, Credit Valley will get started on phase 2, the construction of A and H blocks.

Bill 151's many progressive measures mean that for the new mothers in western Mississauga, Credit Valley Hospital's 365 beds will increase by at least an additional 140 beds. Bill 151's measures will mean that at a facility built 21 years ago for 2,700 births per year, and now handling more than 5,000 births per year, new moms are going to be able to give birth at their local hospital, not be turned away, and will get the world-class care they have come to expect at Credit Valley Hospital right in western Mississauga.

Now, there have been some who have called our phase 2 expansion a P3. Nothing could be further from the truth. Our Credit Valley Hospital is, at this time, publicly run, publicly accountable and publicly funded. While we construct phase 2, our Credit Valley Hospital will be publicly run, publicly accountable and publicly funded, and when it's all done, our Credit Valley Hospital will be publicly run, publicly accountable and publicly funded. All those companies who earned their funds by supplying the parts, construction and expertise to build phase 2 are suppliers. They're not partners; they're not owners.

They're suppliers. And Credit Valley will pay cash. Credit Valley employs a vice-president, paid by the hospital to oversee construction of phase 2.

Credit Valley Hospital is just one of the many ways in which our government, through such measures as Bill 151, the Budget Measures Act, has kept its commitment to western Mississauga. The final one is coming up this month in western Mississauga. We expect to be turning the sod on the Lisgar GO train station, yet another way of improving the way Ontario moves people from where they live to where they want to be, and does it safely, reliably and on time.

It's been a pleasure to speak to Bill 151. I look forward to its early passage.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): I want to just comment for a moment on the issues that stand behind the bill we're looking at this evening. I think one of the most important aspects of this bill is the whole notion of being able to see the fact that we have to have long-term success. If you look at the kinds of issues that have been raised through this, we can see there are some short-term.

If you take, for instance, the kind of on-the-fly decision of the Minister of Health in raising money for emergency room doctors, it demonstrates the inability of this government to understand that it is long-term answers that are necessary. While it's perhaps appropriate to provide further financial incentive to those doctors, what Ontarians need even more is a sustainable kind of program that will speak to those issues. Certainly in that regard, the importance of understanding the flow from the people who arrive in emergency, the kind of tie-ups that people have, the inability of hospitals to provide acute care beds, the lack of initiative on the part of this government to provide long-term-care beds—these all speak to that short-term, on-the-fly kind of reaction to funding issues.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Just some comments in response to the member from Mississauga West. I didn't get to hear much, and I apologize, but I did hear him, earlier on, praising the Minister of Education around the—how much?—\$1-billion announcement to build 100 new schools. What I am fond of saying is that the Liberals like to make a lot of announcements about money and capital projects. I'd like to explain it to the member from Mississauga West in the following way, because I'm sure he understands this: Your Liberal government promised to spend \$200 million in 1994-95—never spent one cent. That was Mr. Kennedy. In 1995-96, Mr. Kennedy said, "We're going to spend \$275 million for capital projects." I don't know how much he spent, but he said, "We're going to have a first phase of that \$275 million, and we're going to spend \$75 million for Good Places to Learn." In committee I said, "Did you spend it all?" Kennedy said, "Yes, we did. We spent all of it." Lo and behold, I find that they didn't spend the \$75 million; they spent only about \$20 million.

1900

They announced just recently that they're going to spend \$1 billion more to create 100 new schools, and all I can say to the member for Mississauga West is, "You guys—all you do is make announcements. The money's not real; it's fictitious."

The member for Brampton Centre—God bless her little soul—said how great the news was today, but all I want to say to both of them is, "This money is never going to come. They're just announcements." That's how you fix things: You just simply announce things, and the money never flows. That's the problem with the Liberal government."

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Brant—

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): Scarborough.

The Deputy Speaker: I'm having a great time tonight. Scarborough Southwest—there we go.

Mr. Berardinetti: I just wanted to make some comments on the member for Mississauga West who spoke this evening. There are some measures in Bill 151 that are worth talking about. If you look carefully at the bill, what we've brought in in the bill is called tax increment financing, or TIF. What this provision does is help to assist in new pilot projects that are involved in re-development of public infrastructure in brownfields.

We've got two pilot projects that we are going to work on: the subway expansion in York region in the city of Toronto, and the West Don Lands, a brownfield development initiative that is part of the revitalization of the Toronto waterfront. What we're saying is, "Let's look at these two projects. Let's let them get started and give them an incentive." The incentive is that, as the assessment value of these properties and projects goes up, the tax money that's generated is not flowing to the general coffers but is put back into the projects to be reinvested there. So those who are involved in this will have an incentive to want to see these projects through to their fruition. I think the long-term goal of this is that, if it works well in these two projects and as it's evaluated, we can do this in other brownfields.

In Scarborough Southwest, we have large tracts of brownfield land that need to be redeveloped, but there is really no incentive for someone to come in there and do it. If they know that they will have their property tax values put back into the particular project they're working on, they're more likely to do it. That in itself makes this a unique and very special budget.

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): The member for Mississauga West has brought forward his views on Bill 151 this evening. I know that he sincerely supports this bill, but it's a bill that does not enjoy the support of the opposition parties. In fact, our caucus voted against it at its first reading because we're opposed to the budgetary policy of this government. We know that after three years—and we're almost into the pre-election run-up—this government will say anything and do anything to try and get itself re-elected. We don't have confidence in the statements the government makes with respect to

their budgetary policy, with respect to Bill 151 or with respect to almost anything else.

The member for Mississauga West devoted much of his speech, I understand, to predicting the outcome of the upcoming election in the riding of Don Valley West, and I would beg to differ with him as to what the outcome will be. Certainly, time will tell, and the people of that riding will have the opportunity to decide which of the candidates whose names are on the ballot would be best suited and capable to represent their interests in the next provincial Parliament. I'm certainly looking forward to seeing John Tory here in the next Parliament, and I certainly expect that to happen.

The member for Mississauga West, I understand, also talked about health care, and certainly health continues to be the number one concern of the people of Ontario—at least that's what the pollsters tell us, and it's certainly what I hear when I talk to my constituents in many cases. They want the health care system to be there for them when they need it or when their family needs it. We continue to have a severe doctor shortage issue in my riding and many ridings all across the province. Of course, recently, the Grand River Hospital in Kitchener-Waterloo, which serves many constituents in Waterloo-Wellington in many ways, has had trouble staffing doctors to keep their emergency department open. Obviously, much, much more effort needs to be done to focus on this issue and solve it. It's our position as a caucus that the solutions have to come forward. We'll continue to advocate for those.

The Deputy Speaker: The member from Mississauga West has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Delaney: Well, love is in the air. It's unusual for four members from three different parties to make remarks that are so strongly in favour of a government budget bill.

The member from York North agrees with Ontarians and with their government about the need for long-term planning. That's why Ontario has approved a medical training facility at the University of Toronto at Mississauga, a sustainable program to train the very doctors that our western Mississauga community, and indeed all of Peel region, so badly need. The member for Trinity-Spadina, a good guy, talked about 100 new schools being built for \$1 billion. Where was he yesterday, when we announced that? A new school: Oscar Peterson Public School. He could have stood on the very ground of the facilities that we've announced.

Coming up is Stephen Lewis Secondary School. It's already open. It's on Thomas Street. Next January, St. Joan of Arc is going to open on Thomas Street at Churchill Meadows. That's not fiction; that's fact. I say to my colleague, come and run your fingers over the concrete; come and get out of the cold; come into the warm classrooms in the new education infrastructure being built in western Mississauga.

My colleague from Scarborough Southwest mentions public transit infrastructure. I sincerely hope he joins us in a few weeks in turning the sod on another example of

that infrastructure, the new Lisgar GO Train station at 10th Line and the tracks in Lisgar. Finally, I say to my colleague from Waterloo—Wellington, come and touch the infrastructure. See how a good government actually keeps its commitments and helps build a stronger Ontario for everyone, all of our 12 million citizens.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie—Lincoln): Thank you.

Applause.

Mr. Hudak: Jeez, see if you're still clapping after an hour. Will you be?

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): An hour?

Mr. Hudak: An hour, my friends. It's an important piece of legislation, Bill 151, with—

Hon. Mr. Caplan: It's also your birthday.

Mr. Hudak: It is my birthday.

Applause.

Mr. Hudak: Thank you. You're very kind. There's no place I would rather be than hanging out with my friends and colleagues in the Ontario Legislative Assembly, as I celebrate my 39th birthday, the last year of my 30s. Debbie and I had a very nice evening last night, celebrating on Halloween.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: You handed out candy to kids?

Mr. Hudak: We handed out candy to the kids who came by. We had a nice dinner and some very nice gifts. In fact, you know those GPS indicators? When I'm visiting other ridings, I tend to sometimes misread directions and end up in somebody else's riding, so now I have this little computer thing.

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: Now I'll be able to find my way around, Mr. Bartolucci, so I'll find out where you live in Sudbury and pay you a visit next time I'm travelling across northern Ontario, because no doubt the Bartolucci home will be bookmarked; if not, that fancy office that northern development and mines has. That has a big boardroom. It's a good spot. Thanks to my colleagues for those kind birthday wishes.

1910

Let me start by offering a little bit of a preliminary here before I get into Bill 151. I do want to thank Sarah Hanafy, from Minister Sorbara's office, who is joining us this evening. Ms. Hanafy is the special legislative assistant to Minister Sorbara—"special" legislative assistant, so this is a higher rank than your regular, everyday legislative assistant. I do appreciate her assistance. She was kind enough to arrange a briefing on a number of matters of interest to me and to other members of the Progressive Conservative caucus, and most recently an extended briefing on Bill 151. Sarah is working hard and we appreciate her assistance in that matter. And Craig Slater, who is the director of legal services at the Ministry of Finance; he led a team of some 50 people, who took time out of their busy days as civil servants to address the questions that I had; as well as support from PC researcher David Goodwin, on the bill. I know,

having been in the Macdonald block before, how busy Ms. Hanafy, Mr. Slater and the team are in their work as civil servants, and I do appreciate what ended up being about a two-hour briefing on this. As my colleague the Minister of Northern Development and Mines knows, this has a significant number of schedules. In fact, it exhausts all of the letters of the alphabet, from A to Z, and then it goes to Z.9. Maybe I'll have a chance this evening, although my time is limited, to discuss each schedule in the bill, but I do want to offer my thanks, and of course to the minister as well for authorizing that briefing. I think it's an important part of our role as legislators to ensure that opposition members and government members have an opportunity to fully understand a bill of this complexity. I thank the minister for ensuring that that did happen.

I want to start out a little bit in responding to the minister's opening comments on this bill. The minister did spend a considerable amount of time on the issue of the current spat, if you will, between the federal and provincial governments with respect to the Canada-Ontario agreement—again, another topic of a briefing that Ms. Hanafy is kind enough to arrange, because the provincial government says one thing, the federal government says another, with respect to the Canada-Ontario agreement. I look forward to seeing more detail of the province's position on this matter.

I do want to say, though, that Premier McGuinty has been a spectacular failure at securing a better deal from the federal government. I think all three parties here in the assembly agree that Ontario does need a better deal from Ottawa as part of Confederation. Premier McGuinty has made that case from day one—I don't know if it was day one particularly. The reason I say that—my colleague the Minister of Northern Development and Mines is saying it was day one.

I do recall that initially, when the federal government offered a pig in a poke, a very poor deal on SARS funding—I think my colleagues remember that. I'm seeing if I have some level of detail here. I do recall, when Ontario went through that tragic experience, particularly here in the city of Toronto, that it impacted our province as a whole dramatically when the SARS crisis hit the province of Ontario in—what was that?—2003. Certainly, that caused a major impact on a number of areas, specifically the health care system. In fact, it was a disaster with the increase in bills, the stress it put on the health care system. I certainly know, coming from a tourism area, that it had major implications on the tourism sector in Niagara, where I'm from, here in the city of Toronto and elsewhere.

We went quite strong at the time. The then Progressive Conservative government was asking for a fair share of funding from Ottawa, because it was a disaster, no doubt. Ottawa, then under Prime Minister Chrétien, offered a very paltry amount of funding to the province of Ontario, and the then Progressive Conservative government under Premier Eves said that that deal was not good enough. Minister Clement, now the federal Minister of Health,

then the provincial Minister of Health, if I recall correctly, said that it was far from what the federal share should be.

I recall Dalton McGuinty at the time sitting just here as Leader of the Opposition that attacked the then Progressive Conservative government for being too aggressive for using brass knuckle tactics. I can't remember exactly what he said, but he said it was done for partisan purposes and we should get along better and tone down the rhetoric, to paraphrase what Premier McGuinty said at the time.

Then, of course, the 2003 election transpired. The Leader of the Opposition, Dalton McGuinty, became Premier McGuinty and, when I'm talking about day one, basically accepted the poor, paltry deal from the then Chrétien government and settled for far less than Ontario's share. I think this established in the federal government's mind, to be rather blunt about it, that Dalton McGuinty was a pushover. When it came to federal-provincial relationships and the important role the federal government has to support Ontario on cases like this—the SARS funding—Dalton McGuinty bought a pig in a poke and was a pushover in Jean Chrétien's mind. That old man of the Liberal Party, Jean Chrétien, ran the table with Dalton McGuinty when it came to SARS funding. I remember a sheepish Dalton McGuinty saying, "Oh, we got a good deal." Bunk—not true at all. He sold out for a very poor share of funding from the federal government and I think at that point in time showed Ottawa that Ontario was not going to fight for its fair share and, I think because of that weak start in his negotiations with the federal government, put Ontario's case at some disadvantage.

As I said, all three parties in the Legislature agree Ontario needs a better deal. We hope that Premier McGuinty is successful, but my goodness, he really shot himself in the foot in his first opportunity to wrest more funds from Ottawa and established the reputation at Parliament that you could take advantage of this guy, that he wasn't going to be strong and stand up for Ontario. So we began at quite a disadvantage.

Shortly thereafter, after Dalton McGuinty began breaking all of his campaign promises, he needed to turn the focus, turn the channel, as they say, and he came up with this \$23-billion gap. Remember the \$23-billion gap that the Premier, the suddenly verbally muscular Premier, was going to wrest from Ottawa to get Ontario's fair share of funding and close this \$23-billion gap? This was circa 2004-5? Well, now in 2006, nary a mention of the \$23-billion gap. It's certainly dropped from the Premier's lexicon entirely. I think at the end of the day that \$23-billion gap came under attack from a number of quarters as not being an accurate reflection of the finances. In fact, in the *Toronto Star*, Robert Benzie's column recalled how that \$23-billion gap had disappeared from the Premier's press releases, his speeches and his language. In fact, when he had the so-called thinkers' conference not too long ago here in the city of Toronto, Don Drummond, one of his own panellists, basically said that he did

not agree with McGuinty's characterization of this so-called \$23-billion gap. So that disappeared.

Then we had the—was it the council of Confederation? Which I guess is an opportunity really for the Premiers to band together to find like causes, form alliances, and then, through the council of Confederation, wrest a better deal from Ottawa to address the fiscal imbalance. Premier McGuinty adopted a rather strange strategy where, one by one, he picked off each individual Premier and attacked them or their province or their claim for more money from Ottawa. I think the problem was that by attacking the other Premiers or the other provinces—not helped much by the member for Vaughan, who said that Ontario had nothing to learn from the Maritimes on the eve or so, a day or two before the Premier was visiting with the Maritime Premiers. It certainly alienated those on the east coast. As a result, the council of Confederation really flew apart at the seams, and at the end of the day there was no agreement made, no alliances forged by the Premier. He basically stood alone at the table. One would think that maybe that was intentional, but I think it was a lack of strategy. One would think that if you forged alliances with the other provinces, you'd strengthen your case at that table rather than standing one against the other Premiers—and the Prime Minister later on.

So we've seen a number of failures on this file, starting with accepting a terrible deal on SARS when Ontario deserved a lot more, followed by the change in rhetoric on the \$23-billion gap, which seemed to be the Premier's main goal, and now it has faded away. The council of Confederation flew apart at the seams. So here we are, one year from the election, the Premier demanding a better deal from Ottawa, but to date it has been a spectacular failure. I hope he's successful. I would like to see more funds coming from Ottawa to support Ontario programs, no doubt. And I want the Premier to be successful. My goodness, it's been hard, the way he's handled this file and blown so many opportunities.

1920

My God, remember Paul Martin was having a going-out-of-business sale? Everybody was getting a better deal from Paul Martin. He so badly wanted to be elected Prime Minister with a majority government, so badly wanted to show up his rival, John Chrétien, and was willing to give away the entire store. Newfoundland got a better deal. The Maritime provinces got a better deal. Saskatchewan got a better deal. Dalton McGuinty negotiated a deal with Paul Martin when he was having a going-out-of-business sale, and now it seems that the federal government, according to the Premier, is not honouring that deal. We'll see what the details say, but I certainly think that Dalton McGuinty, when you'd think he had Paul Martin over a barrel, allowed some unclear language or some loopholes in that deal to blow the best opportunities Ontario's had in a long time.

Premier McGuinty has been a spectacular failure in his negotiations with the federal government. We'll see what

happens next year. I hope he secures a better deal but, my goodness, he's blown a lot of chances as it is.

The other point I'll make on this in response to the finance minister is the general lack of credibility that Premier McGuinty has with the other Premiers and the Prime Minister. It all stems from so many broken promises. You wonder if the Premier presents a set of data on the one hand and what he has up his sleeve on the other.

When you see a government that has increased program spending by some 8% a year, when you see a government that goes on an end-of-year spending spree that would make a drunken sailor blush and then goes new cap in hand to Ottawa begging for more funding, it strains credibility.

He attacked directly Minister Flaherty, Minister Clement, Mr. Baird, in his most recent barrage at the Liberal convention to try to get some better press from some weak press that had come out in the first couple of days. Minister Flaherty, who's a former finance minister, Minister Baird and Minister Clement know the situation Ontario is in. They've been at the cabinet table. Minister Flaherty is the finance minister, so it must be particularly upsetting when they see the high tax and high hydro rate regime that Dalton McGuinty has brought in and see money frittered away on changing the logo of the province of Ontario. How can you go begging to Ottawa and say that you're trying to do a good job of the finances when you blow that much money on redesigning a flower, when you attack the trillium, or dropping the C from the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp.?

Premier McGuinty's credibility gap has done tremendous damage to Ontario's chances of securing a better deal from Ottawa, and he's running out of time. If he can't do so in the next year's time, one wonders if it's not time for Premier McGuinty to step aside and for somebody else to takeover who has a clear and consistent message, because if you're saying one thing in Ontario, going out on a spending spree and then begging poor to Ottawa, that strains credibility. If you're saying you have a \$23-billion gap and you're saying, "Well, no, we don't say there's a \$23-billion gap any more," if you accept a raw deal on SARS funding and then you get mad at Ottawa, well, no wonder Dalton McGuinty is seen as a pushover, because he has made mistakes in this file that continue to haunt Ontario today.

I hope he's successful but, my goodness, he's hurting himself and he is hurting Ontario's chances of securing a better deal by so many conflicting messages and by straining his own credibility in the province with other provinces and with the federal government.

Just to make a twist on the common expression, it's not a matter of shooting the messenger, but the messenger has shot himself by breaking 50 promises, by changing his mind on fiscal federalism several times, by accepting a poor SARS deal. We have a wounded messenger. The top salesman for Ontario obviously does not seem to be taken seriously for the province because of mistakes he's made on the file.

I'll leave it at that and move more towards Bill 151 specifically, but I wanted to respond to some of the comments by my friend and colleague the Minister of Finance.

I certainly hope the Premier, in one of his most important responsibilities, does get a better deal from Ottawa but, my goodness, after three years of failure, he's running out of time.

Let me make a couple of comments about the general finances of the province of Ontario before I get into some of the detailed schedules of Bill 151.

You will remember Dalton McGuinty's campaign plan. He had brought forward a number of pledges, a number of promises he said he would fulfill if people chose to elect him Premier of Ontario, and then set out a costing which was signed off on by one David Hall, principal of Vista Economics. I'll take you back to that document. The Premier, Dalton McGuinty, then the opposition leader, leader of the Ontario Liberal Party, said that for 2005-06 the revenue of the province of Ontario would be \$79.2 billion, his total expenditure would be \$78.2 billion, and less a reserve of \$1 billion, he would have a balanced budget. I think he had actually promised a balanced budget each and every year of his mandate.

He made a number of promises. I think the Toronto Sun had calculated some 231 or so promises. The cost of those promises, I guess, according to Vista Economics, has part of his platform saying how they will pay for it and how they will invest it. They costed all his promises. He said at the end of the day, "If revenue in 2005-06 is \$79.2 billion, our total expenditure will be \$78.2 billion and we will balance the books."

Now, after three years of the McGuinty government, a significant amount of evidence has come in on the numbers. I'll call your attention to the public accounts of 2005-06. The actual revenues that have come into the province of Ontario for the fiscal year 2005-06 were \$84.2 billion, expenses \$83.9 billion, for a surplus last year of \$298 million. So Dalton McGuinty said he needed \$79.2 billion to finance all of his campaign promises, that was his revenue. He has \$84.2 billion now at the end of 2005-06, so some \$5 billion more in revenue than he said he needed during the campaign. And what does he do? Well, he doesn't keep his campaign promises. He's broken, we count, at least 50 of his campaign commitments and, according to the public accounts, has \$5 billion more in revenue in 2005-06, and is predicting a deficit for 2006-07.

So you take out, say, the \$2.4 billion approximately, for the sake of argument, from the so-called health tax, which we all know is just an income tax that goes into the consolidated revenue fund, the big pot of money over there in the Minister of Finance's office, and there's approximately \$2.6 billion more that Dalton McGuinty has in excess revenue than he said he needed in order to balance the budget and keep his campaign promises. So a heck of a lot of revenue has come in there, largely, as you

know, through tax hikes on working families, seniors and businesses in Ontario.

Why the fiscal challenge? Why does Dalton McGuinty narrowly run a surplus, according to his numbers, and forecast a deficit for this upcoming year? Well, he has a major spending problem. I remind you again that the expenditures Dalton McGuinty said he would hit by 2005-06 by keeping all his campaign promises were \$78.2 billion; his actual expenses \$83.9 billion, some \$5.7 billion more in expenditures than he promised he would do. In reality, the only reason Dalton McGuinty broke his promise and brought in his income tax increases was because he broke his promise on controlling expenditures. And because Dalton McGuinty has spent, as of last fiscal year, some \$5.7 billion more than he promised, he increased taxes to help finance that.

I know my colleagues say, "Well, what about the so-called \$5.6-billion deficit?" I think members of the House know that 2003-04 had a significant number of one-time events. We can debate 2003-04 all night long. The reality is, look at the amount of revenue that has come in. The revenue bounced back strongly in 2004-05, and the Premier ramped up his spending. We're looking at, in many of his years, an approximately 8%-plus increase in program spending while the economy was growing around 4% on a nominal basis.

1930

So here we are with a budget bill, a budget that says it's going to run a deficit. Let's get this straight too. Last year they had a surplus—approximately \$300 million—and they had \$2 billion-plus in a last-minute spending spree. They had to get it out the door because they wanted to run a deficit last year. The only thing that limited spending in March 2006 was the ability of the minister to sign those cheques, lick the envelope and get them in the mail as quickly as possible. That was really the only limit on this mad money spending spree—\$2 billion-plus. In reality, they had at least probably a \$2.3-billion surplus in 2005-06. So they have that massive amount of money in the treasury. They try to spend their way into a deficit. The revenue has actually increased this year, as of Q2, some \$1.3 billion. They could look back at the economic update. So they had a surplus last year. On top of that, they had a lot of end-of-year spending to hide the size of the surplus, their revenue has increased this year, and they say they're going to run a deficit. It defies credibility. The only explanation for that is, they're going to ramp up spending even more so and maybe break their old records.

I know Bob Rae is now a good thing. Bob Rae is now a good thing, according to my colleagues on the Liberal benches—or at least some of them. But they used to castigate Bob Rae—not all of them, but some of the significant ones he's pointing at. You're all significant—don't get me wrong—but there's a couple who are heavy hitters around the cabinet table who are handing out those Bob Rae pamphlets to all of you.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Name names.

Mr. Hudak: I've said Bob Rae; that's enough.

I remember how my Liberal colleagues used to castigate Bob Rae for his runaway spending. They said he was out of control. But Dalton McGuinty's spending increases left Bob Rae in the dust. Dalton McGuinty is actually the world record holder of increases in spending, more so than Bob Rae or that old favourite, David Peterson. Remember him? He liked to spend money too, right? Aw, he's got nothing on Dalton McGuinty.

Now, where was I? Runaway spending. So they're planning on running a deficit, I guess, in 2006-07, because they have no control over their impulse to spend, spend and spend.

Let's look at some of the areas they are spending in, by the way. Why not? I know they'll say, "Well, we're spending it all on health care. We're spending it all on education."

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Infrastructure.

Mr. Hudak: Well, infrastructure is one of my colleague's favourites. We're talking about that, having a good discussion in estimates.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Yes, we are.

Mr. Hudak: But if you look at their spending between 2003-04 to 2005-06, health spending has increased by 12%, education spending has increased by 17%. If you asked the average Ontarian, most would probably put health or education, or both, in their priority basket. So I'll say to my colleague the Minister for Northern Development and Mines, a 12% health and a 17% education increase. What do you think the increase is in the other spending areas, taking out debt interest? It's 21%, just to kill the suspense. I know the Minister of Northern Development and Mines would know that—a 21% spending increase outside of health care and outside of education. That's the reason we continue to find ourselves in deficit this year.

Mind you, they do have—what?—about \$1.4 billion in slush funds hidden in this current budget, as adjusted for the economic outlook, and another billion dollars in reserve. So there's about \$2.4 billion sitting there, and probably more if you look at past behaviour. The accuracy of the revenue figures and the amount of spending the government would do at the end of the year gives you pause to be concerned. But there you go. What was it? Twenty-one per cent? Is that what I said, to my friend the minister? Twenty-one per cent outside of those areas. Some of those examples—my friend from Brantford has the Brantford Charity Casino, a major employer in his area. He was probably outraged when he drove by the Brantford Charity Casino and saw that brand new sign there, OLG, where that whole C had disappeared. I don't know; when I would drive by Fort Erie Race Track and Slots and saw that money that should be coming to taxpayers was spent on a new sign to drop the C from OLGC—I mean, come on. You wonder where the priorities of the McGuinty government are. And why are you picking on the C anyway? Why not the G or the L? Or are they to go next? Six million dollars, at least, to get rid of a C. C is Canada.

Interjection: "Conservative."

Mr. Hudak: “Conservative”: Is that why? Fair enough. Thankfully they didn’t get rid of any other letters. Lord knows what that would have cost. Those L’s aren’t cheap. Six million dollars to take down the C. Who knows what it would have cost if he had bought a vowel. Bensimon Byrne would have given you a good proposal about what vowel to buy and how to design that U-E-I-O.

Speaking about Bensimon Byrne, they redesigned the Ontario trillium logo for \$219,000, plus countless millions to roll out on new government stationery, signage, vehicles etc.—picking on the trillium. It was some \$220,000 simply for the redesign.

I know my leader, the next member for Don Valley West—

Hon. Mr. Caplan: East.

Mr. Hudak: He may turn his attention to east next: do west first, then east. You never know.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: The beast from the east.

Mr. Hudak: The beast from the east is gearing up.

There was some \$20 million invested to give raises to Liberal appointees on the various agencies, boards and commissions, also extending their term for up to 10 years.

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): And Tory members.

Mr. Hudak: Well, we’ll see how many of the Tory members get a 10-year appointment. We’ll watch that closely. That was \$20 million. Partisan government advertising: \$100 million. Firing nurses: I still remember that bizarre press conference by Health Minister George Smitherman when he used \$91 million of additional health money that had come in—\$91 million to fire nurses. That’s entirely bizarre. The LHINs: You guys must talk about those LHINs at cabinet all the time. You must say, “George, Minister, what’s happening with these LHINs?” I drive by my LHIN and I just see a tumbleweed going down the hallway on a regular basis.

So you closed down, consolidated the community care access centres and invested in these LHINs, for some reason using dollars allocated to the health envelope to hire a new level of middle managers as opposed to investing in front-line care. These LHINs are hopelessly behind. I don’t know what the heck they’re doing—a lot of consultations, I guess, a lot of hand holding. But I’ve not seen any positive impact from LHINs on health care delivery in my riding, in fact, I’d argue quite the opposite. Money in the LHINs could have been better invested in hiring more doctors, more nurses, more physiotherapists etc.

I guess I needn’t go on much longer on this particular topic, since my time is rapidly coming to an end. But my central point is that my advice would be, not only to my hard-working colleagues in the Progressive Conservative caucus but to other members of the assembly as well, that when you see that kind of irresponsible spending, when you see that many broken promises, when you see merciless tax hikes on working families, seniors and businesses in the province of Ontario, you have no choice but to reject the budgetary policy of the Dalton McGuinty

government. You have no choice. I’ve laid out my case. This is just a bill that enables that misguided, high-tax, high-hydro, runaway-spending approach by Dalton McGuinty that would make Bob Rae and David Peterson blush. We have no choice, as responsible members and guardians of the taxpayers’ investments in this province, but to reject the budgetary policy of the Dalton McGuinty government included in that, despite the good work by Sarah Hanafy et al. to reject Bill 151.

Speaking of which, I had mentioned the high-taxation, high-hydro policies of the Dalton McGuinty government. Let’s not forget about the 90,000-and-growing well-paying manufacturing jobs that have fled the province of Ontario since 2005; in fact, so many things to say, so many things to say.

1940

Mr. Marchese: Take your time. Don’t go in a hurry.

Mr. Hudak: I know that my colleague the New Democratic member and members of his caucus, just like our caucus, are concerned about the 4,000 jobs—well-paying jobs—lost in the forestry industry sector. That impacts on the entire province, but many northern Ontario communities are devastated by the impact of the McGuinty government policies, with 4,000 factory jobs lost.

I was shocked, absolutely shocked, to read, I think it was in the Royal Bank’s report, that the unemployment rate is higher in Ontario than the national average for only the second time in 30 years. You’d think that would be a problem. You’d think that would be seen by the government to be a significant and pressing problem to deal with in the budget or the economic statement, but instead they turn their backs.

Mr. Marchese: They’ve got to lower taxes, for God’s sake. We’ve got to lower taxes. Tell them, Tim.

Mr. Hudak: Remember this, I say to my colleague—he knows this and he’s concerned—that the Royal Bank of Canada forecasts that Ontario will be dead last in economic growth in 2007—dead last. That’s not the Ontario I grew up in. It’s not the Ontario that we’ve always known, that’s been a leader in economic growth, and the bread and butter of Ontario’s economy, the manufacturing sector with its well-paying jobs. Royal Bank, RBC Financial Group: “Ontario slips to last place on growth.” Holy smokes.

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: I would take you out on that, I say to my friend from Willowdale. You look at the growth rates under the Mike Harris government for this economy: not only a leader in Canada, a leader in North America in job creation. Today, in Dalton McGuinty’s Ontario, 2007? Dead last, according to the RBC.

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): The Royal Bank is a font of information.

Mr. Hudak: My colleague doesn’t like the Royal Bank. I think with some sarcasm she says that the Royal Bank is the font of information. I think they take their work rather seriously, and their word is respected. My colleague from Brampton may differ, but I’ll read, for her edification, from page 1. The Royal Bank says, “We

think Ontario will narrowly avoid a recession and post its weakest growth rate since 2003.” Reminder, 2003: SARS, the blackout, a very difficult year for the district of Ontario. “Manufacturing is contracting in high-cost labour-intensive sectors, improving productivity shortfalls in others, and is awaiting higher auto production.... All this despite energy price relief and being one year from an election.”

So my colleague from Brampton says she’s not a big fan—I’m putting words in her mouth—she’s skeptical about the Royal Bank. Your favourite bank is?

Mrs. Jeffrey: I don’t think I have one.

Mr. Hudak: You don’t have one. All right. So maybe you’re saying you don’t think the Royal Bank had done its homework, but a week later, the CIBC World Markets provincial forecast—the Royal Bank said Ontario would be dead last in growth in 2007. What do you think the CIBC said?

Mr. Marchese: They’re all the same.

Mr. Hudak: My colleague says they’re all the same, but there’s actually a slightly different prediction. The CIBC says Ontario will be dead last in growth in 2007 and in 2008. Let me read from page 6, under the headline “Ontario Rebound Not Yet in Sight.” “In Ontario, quarterly GDP growth has failed to top 2% ... going back to the start of 2005.... The province appears headed for a tepid 1.4% GDP gain on a full-year basis in 2006, making Ontario the slowest-growing jurisdiction in the country.”

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: My friend from Willowdale says, “Oh, Mike Harris had a slow-growing economy,” or something to that effect. Well, listen: This “pace would be slower than at any time in the past decade, and amounts to less than half of what is generally considered the province’s non-inflationary potential growth rate”—news you’d think would make the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, the Minister of Finance and members across the floor stand up and take notice.

Page 7 of the CIBC World Markets: Provincial Forecast says, “Another 50,000 manufacturing jobs risk being lost before the end of 2007, with today’s layoffs conjuring up memories of the 1990s recession.”

Look at this: the who’s who of manufacturing in the Hamilton-Niagara area. “Recent manufacturing job losses include Ferranti-Packard in St. Catharines”: 212 well-paying manufacturing jobs, gone; Bazaar and Novelty in St. Catharines—200 jobs; General Motors in St. Catharines—130 jobs; Redpath Sugar in Niagara Falls—20 jobs; Automation Tooling Systems in Cambridge and Burlington—169 jobs; Rheem Canada in Hamilton—150 jobs; just a couple of weeks ago, sadly, Ball Packaging in Burlington closing up shop—300 jobs.

While not manufacturing, Casino Niagara just announced 104 layoffs at the casino. I fear, when you look at the numbers from the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp.—and I know my colleague the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal is engaged in turning that around.

An alarming number of layoffs are forecast in the gaming sector in 2007 as well.

One would think, with the evidence brought forward by the RBC, with the evidence brought forward by the CIBC, with this shocking news, that Ontario would be the only province that grew in the number of unemployed; one would think, with the shocking news of Ontario being last in economic growth, with the shocking news of some 90,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs lost since 2005 and, according to the CIBC, 50,000 to come, that we would have seen, with great alacrity of plan by the Minister of Finance and his economic update to turn this around, a realization that Ontario has the second-highest business taxes in all of North America, a realization that their hydro policy has chased manufacturing jobs out of the province of Ontario, a realization that this needs to be reversed.

But you look through each and every one of those pages in the economic statement—

Mr. Marchese: They will not be moved.

Mr. Hudak: They will not be moved. My colleague said it well. There are some rather meagre measures—and maybe I’ll get a chance to speak to them a little, though my time is rapidly expiring—light on detail and, I’m afraid, light on impact. Some mentioned the accelerating infrastructure projects. We will see, but as I pointed out to my friend the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Ontario is already behind on delivering on previous commitments for infrastructure.

A proposal to have more people travel to the province of Ontario: Coming from the tourism area, we’re always looking for more people to travel, but I don’t think those 90,000 individuals and their families who lost their jobs in the manufacturing sector in the province of Ontario are prepared to take a vacation.

And a continuation of the high tax, high hydro and runaway spending in the 2006-07 budget: We need a reverse course. We need to lower the tax burden, the regulatory burden faced by working families, seniors and businesses but, instead, the Dalton McGuinty “Damn the torpedoes” approach will continue with the headlong, runaway spending, adding to our provincial debt, maintaining the highest or second-highest tax rate on business in all of North America and standing idly by while 90,000 manufacturing jobs have left, 4,000 in the forestry sector and potentially 50,000 more in the year to come.

So what actually is in Bill 151?

Mr. Zimmer: Substance, substance.

Mr. Hudak: Well, my colleague for Willowdale says, “Some substance.”

I’ll refer him to schedule A of the Assessment Act. In schedule A of the Assessment Act the Premier—and I questioned him about this in the assembly today during question period because the Premier always talks about an assessment freeze. Remember when I talked about how he deals with Ottawa to present one set of numbers on one hand, and who knows what he has up his sleeve on the other? Well, it’s like that in schedule A, right? The Premier is talking all the time about the assessment

freeze—"Until we get system right"—forced to it, by the way, by the Ombudsman and some outcry, rightfully so, by taxpayers about skyrocketing assessments. In fact, I remember the Premier's earlier remarks were that he wasn't going to do anything about it because he didn't run on it, let alone pit bulls and all that kind of stuff he didn't run on either.

1950

Schedule A of the Assessment Act—I'm sorry, to my colleague from Willowdale. If you look in there, what happens conveniently after the next election is you get a triple whammy of three years of assessment increases hitting you all at once. The tax year 2009 will be based on market valuations of January 1, 2008. Today, homes, for assessment purposes, are valued at January 1, 2005. There's a freeze in the province. The Premier tells you about the freeze. What he doesn't tell you is about that ticking time bomb of property assessment increases conveniently after the next election, three years of assessment increases, all coming down on the backs of seniors and working families in one fell swoop after the next election.

Mr. Zimmer: But we'll have the system fixed by then.

Mr. Hudak: He says we'll have the system fixed. I don't know what he means by that. Three years of assessment increases conveniently rolled up into one big ticking time bomb after the election: If that's any kind of fix—you want people to sell their homes.

I don't understand why there aren't some sorts of controls in here. I've brought forward my Homestead Act, which would cap assessment increases at 5% per year as long as home ownership is maintained, other powerful protections like allowing up to \$25,000 in improvements to a home without triggering a reassessment, a modest but important property tax break for seniors, that 5% cap as part of the Homestead Act. I think my colleague from Willowdale voted for it. I thank him for that. I know the member for Wellington had voted for it. My colleagues here had voted for it, and Mr. Marchese may have voted for it. It passed a vote in the assembly. It hasn't been called back for third reading. I'd be happy if the Premier even borrowed some of those and put them in Bill 151, schedule A, to give real protection to homeowners after the next election, but no. We see the true policy of the McGuinty government: conveniently after the next election, three years of assessment increases coming down on homeowners all at once.

Do you remember when Premier McGuinty looked into the TV camera and said he wouldn't raise your taxes? Maybe I didn't have a big-screen TV; maybe he had his fingers crossed somewhere around here and I just didn't pick it up on my television. Maybe he winked and said that wasn't actually what he meant. But I remember him looking into the camera, no fingers crossed, no asterisk appearing above his voice, saying he wouldn't increase taxes, and one of his first bills? One of the biggest tax increases in the history of the province of Ontario.

Here's version 2. While Premier McGuinty is trying to tell seniors and working families that there is some kind of assessment freeze on, boy, oh boy, you get him re-elected: a triple whammy, a ticking time bomb of three years of assessment increases, all coming down at once on working families. Maybe the Premier will allow the Homestead Act to go to a third vote. I would like to see that, but I bet you he won't, because he knows it will pass. He knows it will pass because members of the assembly are on to this provision in Bill 151 that will see a massive, skyrocketing assessment increase after the next election.

I mentioned, in my question, Doug and Tina Palmer of Haliburton, who saw their assessment increase by 43% in one year alone. They were told, if they didn't like it, to sell their home. That's one assessment. Can you imagine what will happen to people like Doug and Tina Palmer if Bill 151 is enacted?

Ken and Ida Young lived in Crystal Lake for 33 years. Their property assessment increased 25%. They appealed and were denied. They're on a pension and a fixed income. They can't afford these skyrocketing assessments, but my goodness, poor Ken and Ida Young. Imagine three years of assessment increases all hitting them at once, if Dalton McGuinty is re-elected, with Bill 151.

Let me move on to other aspects of the bill. I want to express some concerns. We look forward to, and I would fully expect, hearings on the bill. I'm skipping from A to D, schedule D on the Canadian Public Accountability Board Act—and I appreciate the briefing I had today—to talk a bit about the Canadian Public Accountability Board. Given the limits on my time, I won't get into great detail here. I do want to highlight some concerns by various groups about what this bill will do.

If you go to the Ontario Bar Association's website, for example, there's a letter on that website from James Morton, president of the Ontario Bar Association, that has some significant concerns about schedule D of this bill. To read part of Mr. Morton's letter:

"However, the pressing matter at hand as this bill is now before the House for second reading debate is the matter of solicitor-client privilege. Given that this is a fundamental principle for our profession, it is disappointing that there was no contact with relevant stakeholder groups in the legal profession for input in the development of this legislation.... [W]e continue to have significant concerns pertaining to section 11(4) requiring a participating audit firm to provide information or documents to the board even where that information or documents are privileged."

So I look forward to an opportunity here. It does give one concern that a group of the significance of the Ontario Bar Association was not consulted before schedule D was brought forward to the Ontario Legislature. I hope we'll have ample committee hearings so that groups like the OBA can come forward and we can hear directly from the minister and finance staff on how they're going to address this issue. I know that the CGA, the Certified General Accountants, also have concerns about pro-

visions in that aspect of the bill, and I hope they'll have that opportunity in the time ahead.

Schedule L, on the Gasoline Tax Act, basically ensures that ethanol is taxed at the full rate of gasoline, will be taxed the same way as gasoline. The government has asked us to trust them that those funds will go into an ethanol development fund of some sort. Forgive me if I take with several grains of salt the notion of trusting Dalton McGuinty to keep one of his promises.

Mr. Zimmer: Oh, that's unparliamentary.

Mr. Hudak: No, I don't think that's out of the ordinary.

I know that the auto industry has concerns about schedule L and how it applies. My colleague from Oshawa will hopefully have a chance to talk about this as well, somebody who obviously has his ear to the ground when it comes to the auto sector. But I do hope they'll have an opportunity to come forward and speak about the taxation of ethanol. I suspect, when Premier McGuinty made his promises about ethanol being part of gas for an environmental reason, they didn't expect that he would whack the ethanol industry with this new tax.

I want to spend a bit of time—I'm skipping now to schedule Z.2. If they had stopped at Z and moved on to Greek letters, it would be schedule Beta—that was my suggestion—as opposed to Z.2, or it could be BB. But as it is, it's schedule Z.2, on provincial land tax reform. The government has, deep in this bill, a proposal to effectively give the Minister of Finance authority like a municipal council in unorganized areas. There are really two aspects to this. They're going to update the valuation system from sometime in the 1940s to January 1, 2008, in unorganized areas. The Minister of Finance will be given the ability to set a tax rate—just as a municipal council would in Fergus, for example, Mr. Speaker—to decide the tax rate for properties, whether it be homes or businesses, cottages, what have you, in the unorganized areas. The problem we have here is that the Minister of Finance and the Dalton McGuinty government are asking us to trust them to make a reasonable decision on tax hikes. Certainly if you look at the massive tax hikes that Dalton McGuinty brought in while promising the contrary, it gives pause for concern.

Secondly, there is no guarantee in the legislation that this money will be reinvested in northern Ontario. You'd think that would be obvious. You would think that if the unorganized territories were going to pay more taxes after the next election, thanks to Dalton McGuinty, at the very least, those funds would go back to services, to municipalities, to DSSABs in northern Ontario. No such provision exists in Z.2 of Bill 151. As far as this amendment is concerned, all that money from northern Ontario is being funnelled right down here to Queen's Park, into the provincial treasury. We will see if the Minister of Finance will entertain amendments to this bill to ensure that it goes back to northern Ontario. I know my colleagues opposite from northern Ontario would certainly feel the same way. The last thing they want to do, after consultations—and I'll give credit to the government;

consultations took place. But after those consultations, boy, some eyes are going to be opened if that money is not going back to support services in northern Ontario. We wonder too what protections will be put in place to ensure that whatever tax rate the Minister of Finance sets is not going to be a major, major encumbrance on residents and businesses in unorganized areas in northern Ontario.

2000

Schedule Q, the Liquor Control Act: Schedule Q would increase the number of members on the Liquor Control Board of Ontario from seven to 11. As well, it allows for the creation of a chief executive officer, presumably Mr. Peters. I'm just joking; we don't know if that decision's been made yet for Mr. Peters. But a new executive position is being created at the LCBO, as well as four new positions on the board. In itself, you might think this is innocuous—from seven to 11 members—but let's not forget the context. We recently saw, without any real press conference or scrutiny by members of the assembly or by the media, a massive raise, some \$30 million, to the appointees on various agencies, boards and commissions, including the LCBO board. While working families are struggling to make ends meet in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, dealing with higher taxes and higher hydro rates and higher user fees—in fact, we estimate there are some \$2,000 more in costs on a typical working family in the province now than before Dalton McGuinty was elected. It's awfully hard to make ends meet when \$2,000 has disappeared out of your wallet.

The government, through schedule Q, is asking us to trust that they are going to take care, given that they've already significantly increased the rates of pay at the LCBO and made a significant number of patronage appointments of Liberal campaign managers, fundraisers etc. to boards like the LCBO.

You'd think it would be rather innocuous, but given that context of the massive increase in pay to patronage appointees and the number of patronage appointees, we will have to watch very closely, as schedule Q goes through, what kind of individuals are brought forward to the LCBO.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): Heaven forbid we try to trust them now.

Mr. Hudak: My colleague says he's concerned: "Heaven forbid." Well, "concerned" is an understatement.

A few more things, and then I know my colleagues are anxious to join in the debate after the end of this particular submission.

Another of the other scheduled changes as part of this act: One of my old favourites, as the former minister for mining in the province of Ontario—Schedule R changes the Mining Act to give a valuation of rough diamonds. I was told at the briefing, and I appreciate staff in the minister's office being there—who's that tall fellow who works in your office?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): Graham?

Mr. Hudak: Yeah, a good guy. I see him around. He's enjoying working for Mr. Bartolucci, by the way.

Mr. Marchese: A good guy?

Mr. Hudak: He seems like a very good guy. Yeah, he's a very nice guy.

According to staff, they'll use the same valuation method for rough diamonds from the De Beers project just outside of Attawapiskat. I'm happy to see that project going forward.

Mr. O'Toole: You started that.

Mr. Hudak: Well, I don't know if I put a spade in the ground particularly, but we're proud of the investments we made, in Operation Treasure Hunt, for example, under the Mike Harris government that are now paying dividends in northern Ontario. We're pleased to see a diamond mine, the first of its kind in Ontario, opened up.

I know the minister is going to keep a close eye on this. We are giving the opportunity to the government on how it's going to value rough diamonds. They say they're going to do it the same way as the Northwest Territories for consistency. Sometimes, though, trusting Dalton McGuinty with more revenue options is like trusting teenagers with the keys to the liquor cabinet. You need to offer proper controls and oversight.

Interjection: That hurts.

Mr. Hudak: My friend says that hurts. Is it inaccurate? I don't know if it was particularly inaccurate.

Another aspect that will deserve some scrutiny is schedule Z, which makes changes to the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. to allow the Peterson negotiations to go forward. Was this a volunteer role by former Premier Peterson at that point in time, or was he paid for that work on the Rama deal?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: One dollar.

Mr. Hudak: One dollar. We will see if the government got its money's worth on this particular deal, but it certainly will merit some scrutiny to see what happens in the time forward. Looking at some of the revenues coming from the commercial casinos these days and seeing the drop in customer patronage—I think in their own report they say it's a million customers fewer at Casino Windsor since the Smoke-Free Ontario Act was brought in. I think I saw that in their report. There have been layoffs at Windsor, layoffs at Niagara—we'll see where the revenues go. We certainly hope they turn around, but when you look at the OLG's current report, it gives reason for concern.

My colleague opposite from Mississauga was speaking a bit earlier about what I think he described as tax breaks in this legislation, but in reality, a number of the tax measures simply ensure that existing benefits are not clawed back. When there's an increase, for example, to old age security, we want to ensure that benefits they receive from the province of Ontario are not clawed back. That's part of this bill. We're pleased to see it as part of the bill. Similarly, when the new Conservative government in Ottawa brought forward the support for daycare—I forget the exact name of the program, but you know what I mean: the money to support families with

young children—we asked Premier McGuinty on several occasions in the Legislature whether he was going to claw that back through other programs. Eventually, I think after the third or fourth day, he said no. In this legislation, we ensure that no clawback of existing provincial programs takes place. It's a good thing to see, but let's not call these tax breaks. In fact, they're protecting the taxpayers from the government clawing back benefits they receive from other programs.

As always, time flies when you have an opportunity to discuss Bill 151. Again, I thank Ms. Hanafy and staff members from the Ministry of Finance and other ministries who took the time to brief the opposition. I do strongly recommend to members of the assembly to reject the budgetary policies of the McGuinty government that have resulted in so many manufacturing job losses in the province of Ontario and runaway spending.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Marchese: The member for Erie-Lincoln covered a lot of ground and I only have two minutes to respond, in supportive ways.

In fact, one of the issues he talked about was the changes this government has made to the Assessment Act. It's not a whole lot of change. It's simply going to freeze the Assessment Act for 18 months. You will recall that this is something the Conservatives brought in before—the current value assessment—which saw so many people across Ontario get whacked with property tax increases. They get confused between what the city increases by way of the services and the additional whacking they get because the property values go up based on current value. As a result, they get a double whammy, and they have been getting hit over and over again, year after year. The Liberals know this.

The Ombudsman did a study of this and he said, "It's pretty bad. We've got to make changes," and recommended 22 changes to the Assessment Act. The government implements 20 of no great consequence, and leaves out two. So the government says, "We've got to study this. We're going to freeze the assessment for two years, more or less. We're going to come back in two years, after the election, and give you the fullness of our opinion in this regard." The government is going to come back and deal with two questions the Ombudsman hasn't dealt with: the reverse onus, so the onus is no longer upon the citizen to prove that the MPAC recommendations are wrong but upon MPAC to prove they are correct; and forcing MPAC to release the information upon which the computer model is based. They're going to come back, after the election, with what the Ombudsman recommended a while ago, and that will be the end of the reforms to the Assessment Act. That's all we're going to get two years later. "Elect us now. We'll deal with it later."

2010

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I certainly want to congratulate the member from Erie-Lincoln for, I think, a good dissertation, especially on his birthday. I think he should have talked to the whip of his party for making him come to

the Legislature on his birthday. But we are the better for his contribution to this particular debate. He touched on a couple of the schedules.

Schedule Q: The Liquor Control Act has not largely been changed since it was first formed in 1927. In this act, in fact, the chair and the CEO are the same person. Corporate governance worldwide has changed quite significantly, where the chair and the board have a very important oversight role on the staff and the executive function of any company. It is in keeping with that separation that this act makes that change and creates a chief executive officer. I would say that Mr. Peters is doing an outstanding job and has the full confidence of the government in the way that he's carried on with the LCBO. We're adding four new positions, and I think that will be very effective to bring additional advocates—a wine advocate and others—from other sectors.

The member also talked about schedule Z. This is nothing short of historic. We have entered into an agreement in principle with Ontario's First Nations. I had the privilege to be here earlier this spring in a signing ceremony between the Premier, Chief Angus Toulouse, regional chief of Ontario, and Harvey Yesno of the Ontario First Nations Limited Partnership, to bring in and have a full partnership. This will allow Ontario Lottery and Gaming to make payments to First Nations, should that agreement reach its final conclusion.

I did want to speak about schedule Z.7, the Tax Increment Financing Act, a new tool to finance the infrastructure badly needed in this province. I wish the member would have commented on that, because it has done tremendous things worldwide.

Mr. O'Toole: It's always a pleasure to listen to our finance critic, the member from Erie–Lincoln. In the limited time he had on his birthday, I commend him, first, for making the personal sacrifice, and second, for spending so much time preparing such an important speech. I encourage members to get a copy of Hansard tomorrow so that they can use it as a reference point over the next year, because really, what he was trying to establish is a pattern that's being detected under his watch as the critic. There is a pattern here that I think he was making us aware of, that the cycle of Liberal predictability is to continue.

The member from Don Valley East mentioned a couple of schedules on which our critic has briefed us in caucus. To be very leery, he failed to mention the other part of increasing—was it schedule Q?—the LCBO. You'd have to marry that with the \$20 million they've set aside to enrich the patronage appointments. What they've done is, they've increased the number of board members so that they can increase the Liberal patronage. It's almost like the Adscam in Ottawa. The Gomery clause would have to come into it, or the Chuck Guité clause would have to come into some of this stuff.

I would say, quite frankly, that scrutiny is required here, because their revenues are up, and yet the service levels—

Interjection.

Mr. O'Toole: The member from Windsor often says that things are up and things are down. What's up here is taxes, and the satisfaction index is down.

I think there's more to be said. I look forward to making a few comments. I thank the member from Erie–Lincoln for his comments this evening on his birthday.

Mr. Berardinetti: I'll start off by wishing a happy 39th birthday to the member from Erie–Lincoln.

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Thirty-nine?

Mr. Berardinetti: He said he was 39, so I'm taking him at his word. Conservatives always tell the truth.

Bill 151: Many of the points he brought up were criticisms of the bill, but I think we need to look at some of the key positive points in this bill. I spoke a bit earlier this evening about how this would support some of the brownfields and redevelopment of the brownfields, but I also want to talk very briefly in these two minutes about something else that I'm sure the member would be aware of, but would perhaps be encouraged by, and that's the dividend tax credit. By bringing in this dividend tax credit, what we're trying to do is allow businesses to start to want to locate and expand their operations here in Ontario. When you have healthy businesses and growing businesses, you have jobs and also the jobs that are spinoffs from that.

It's extremely crucial that our plan—and we've been laying out this plan since 2003, 2004, 2005, and now we're into 2006. It's a steady movement forward, making the necessary changes so that we have strong communities, a prosperous economy and something that's going to benefit the people of Ontario. This bill does that. The dividend tax credit encourages more investment in Ontario and allows taxpayers to pay less tax on their dividends from large Canadian companies. This will match what the federal government, I think, already has in place.

We would see, for example, companies that want to locate elsewhere in the States or the provinces stay here instead, and that's why I support this bill.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to the member for Erie–Lincoln, who has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Hudak: I thank all my colleagues for their comments and best wishes.

Schedule Z.7, Tax Increment Financing Act: I say to my colleague the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, there wasn't enough time. If I get another chance to speak to this bill, if we get unanimous consent, I would be pleased to speak about Z.7. I've made comments in the past about tax increment financing as a tool in the province of Ontario. It's just that I didn't get to Z.7, and Z.8, as well, the Teachers' Pension Act. We look forward to hearing more about this deal, which will see school boards in the province increasing their contributions to the teachers' pension plan. The members of the plan are contributing a lesser amount in 2008 as part of an agreement from a couple of years ago. So I hope there's more discussion of Z.7 as well as Z.8.

I want to get this on the record too. I've dug up my notes here. We had estimated that the costs of SARS-related expenditures in the 2003-04 fiscal year were some \$1.13 billion. You remember the devastating impact that SARS had on the province of Ontario, the city of Toronto and the provincial finances. Generally, the compensation from the federal government for these types of disasters like the Manitoba flood, a tragedy a few years ago, is 90%. So that would mean that \$1.02 billion would be our fair share from the federal government for SARS.

Dalton McGuinty—he had a big smile on his face, praising Jean Chrétien—at the time accepted, sold out for \$330 million, some \$700 million less than we should have achieved and, really, that set the tone that Dalton McGuinty was going to be a pushover in federal-provincial relationships, and after three years has accomplished next to nothing.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins—James Bay): I've been looking forward to this moment for a long time, because this gives me an opportunity to talk about some things that are pretty important to some people up in northern Ontario when it comes to this particular bill, Bill 151.

My good friend the Minister of Northern Development and Mines would know, as I do, as a good northerner, that there were a number of letters sent to people who live in non-organized municipalities in northern Ontario. Specifically, people in communities like Foleyet who own cottages, hunting camps and various types of buildings in unorganized territories got a letter. That letter said that in 2009, I believe, the province of Ontario will be charging them a municipal assessment on their cottage or camp that happens to be in an unorganized territory.

You probably got the calls, as I did, because not a lot of people up in our part of the province are very happy about that. Most people work hard, as we all understand. Basically, they have a home, they work hard, they raise their families, and then they put together a few dollars and decide, "I'm going to build myself a camp or a cottage, and this is going to be where my family and I go and enjoy ourselves on weekends and summer holidays and on winter holidays. And if we're lucky and get to retire, this may even become a place that we can go to spend half of our time when it comes to retirement."

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Up to now, when you built a camp or a cottage in northern Ontario and it was outside of a municipality, you basically paid a minimal tax to the province of Ontario in recognition that the camp you built was on a lake, a river or somewhere in the bush where there's no running water, no sewers, no bus service to bring the kids to school. There's none of those services that we take for granted in municipalities. Dog catchers, swimming pools, arenas—all those things that we pay municipal taxes for—are non-existent in those communities.

We've recognized in the province of Ontario that those particular buildings should be treated differently and that we should not apply municipal taxation on those areas that are in unorganized territories, because it would

be unfair. The basic idea that you should have representation: You should have a service that is commensurate with the taxes you pay, and that has been the principle up till now.

It would appear—not appear, it's for sure—that in this particular legislation the government is planning in Bill 151 that as of 2009—I believe I'm correct; it might be 2008, but I think it's 2009—the province will be charging a municipal assessment to those people who live in those areas where they now do not pay a municipal assessment. I've got to say there are going to be a lot of people, and there are a lot of people who are mighty upset about this, because it means that those hard-working people who manage to scrape together a few dollars and build themselves a camp are going to pay market value assessment on those buildings. For a lot of them it's going to mean they're not going to be able to hang onto them, because it's a fairly expensive thing.

I speak with some experience. I have a cottage. I have my own home in the city of Timmins that I pay taxes on, \$2,500, \$2,800 a year, whatever it is. Our particular cottage is a family cottage in the municipality of the city of Timmins, so we have to pay yet a second tax bill on that cottage out at Kamiscotia for probably about \$2,400 a year as well. Now, we're fortunate because it's a family cottage. My mother, my brother and I split the costs evenly, the three of us, and we participate in that residence together. The cottage is a place for the family to go, and we're able to equalize the price.

But for a lot of people, that is not going to be an option. People out at places like Saganash Lake and Departure Lake, various places outside municipal boundaries in my riding, are going to be in a situation where they're going to have to pay taxes in their municipality for their homes and an equal amount of taxes, on the market value assessment system, for their cottages. I just say to the government across the way, this is really wrong, because those people are already paying taxes to the municipality in order to receive the services, and to charge them market value assessment on cottages, camps and those places outside the organized municipal areas is unfair because, in the end, based on the market value assessment system, you'll pay almost an equal amount of taxes on your secondary home or your seasonal home, as some people would call it.

I think that raises a whole bunch of problems. Number one, in our part of the province, it's a fair amount of business for companies like Feldman Timber, Timmins Building Supplies, Cashway and others who sell materials to people who build camps and cottages. Quite frankly, it's one of the fairly good sources of income for those businesses and contractors to build those things. Well, imagine now that you have to build one of those and, on top of that, you have to look at a municipal tax bill in perpetuity after 2009. I think a lot of people might decide they don't want to do this, and I think it's unfortunate, because it's going to dissuade people from doing those activities that lead to a good lifestyle but also to a bit of a secondary economy when it comes to providing building

materials and construction opportunities for people in the construction trades when it comes to building those particular cottages.

I say to the government, I'm truly surprised they're doing this, because this is an idea that I think was originally floated—and I might stand to be corrected—as a suggestion when the Conservatives were in power, and the Conservatives, I think rightfully so, said, “No, we're not going down that road.” The Conservatives basically said that to go down the road of charging municipal taxes to people in unorganized territories is unfair because they'd have to pay taxes for services they're not receiving. In fact, as early as last summer, probably June or July of this year, when people stopped me on the street or we got calls from people who were in unorganized territories who were saying, “We're hearing this rumour that there's going to be charges levied on our cottages, our camps, our hunting camps in unorganized territories,” my comment to them was, “I don't believe the government's going to do it. It's the last year of their mandate”—they're not stupid enough, in my view, to basically charge these people municipal taxes going into an election year—and I wouldn't worry about it too much. I don't believe they're going to do it.”

Lo and behold, in August of this year the letters went out to all those people who live in unorganized territories saying that according to laws proposed by the government under Bill 151, if passed in the Legislature, this will come true in 2009, and you will be charged market value assessment. People started calling my office and saying, “Jeez, we got the letters. What goes on, Gilles? You told us two, three months ago that we probably weren't going to pay any taxes because the Liberals weren't going to do this.” I said, “Well, you got the letter, but I can't believe the government's really doing this. I know they sent you the letter, but the Liberal Party is smarter than that,” I thought, “and basically are not going to start charging municipal assessment in unorganized territories on secondary homes,” or seasonal homes, as you would call them.

Here we are. We're in second reading debate. At this point, it's a bit of a moot point. It means to say that I understand, as everybody else does, that the government has a majority in this House, and the government is going to do what the government is going to do. They're going to allow this legislation to pass, as is their right as the majority, and it means to say that as of 2009, those people who have buildings in unorganized territories are going to have to pay tax based on the municipal system, which is market value assessment.

I say to the government across the way: You will reap the reward that that will bring. Because I can tell you it ain't going to go over very well in most places I represent and, I would argue, most of the northern members and some of the people who live in central Ontario. Most of the unorganized territories are in northern Ontario. There are some in the southern and central parts of the province—not a lot, but there are some—but by and large this is a northern Ontario issue.

I talked to my good friend across the way, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines—I consider him a friend of mine; I consider him an honourable colleague. I just say we need your help. We need you, as the minister, to try to do something to stop this from being applied to people who, quite frankly, can't afford to have this happen to them. I say to the government across the way that I think this is ill-thought. I don't think it's a good idea.

I think the basic principles are fairly simple. Number one: for most people, 99.9% of people who own hunting camps or fishing camps or cottages on remote lakes, it is a secondary home. They're living there, in many cases, three, maybe five, weeks a year, and to charge them full municipal assessment for all municipal services in an unorganized territory, I think, is very unfair. Why should somebody who goes to a cottage three to five weeks a year pay municipal taxes on services they're not going to receive? They're going to have to pay the same taxes you would within a municipality for everything from water services to arenas to swimming pools to paved roads to garbage pickup—you name it. All of that is being charged as if you had those services, but in fact you've got your own well or you pump water from the lake; you build your own septic system at \$15,000 or \$20,000 a pop according to today's standards; most places don't even have a dump because the Minister of Natural Resources has closed most of the MNR dumps that exist out in those cottage areas, and most people have to put the garbage in a secured garage—if you don't, the bears are going to rip it out of the garbage pail pretty fast—put it in your truck and run it in to the municipal dump when you come back out on the weekend. There are really no services out in those remote areas.

So I just say it is not a good idea, and I hope the government would see their way through to backing off on this particular part of the bill, because I think it's a part that, quite frankly, doesn't serve us well.

The other thing I want to speak to is the whole issue of municipal assessment in regard to, I think, this growing feeling that a lot of people within the province have in regard to how fair the system is and how it's working for people who are paying municipal taxes, period.

I first came here in 1990, and I was here for the initial debates on the call for a change to the municipal assessment system. The argument basically was this: The system, as it existed in the early 1990s, was that people who had buildings in the city of Toronto or Timmins or wherever it might be were charged assessment based on what the values were sometime back. For example, I think that prior to the 1990s, municipal assessment for the city of Timmins was based on the 1970 values of homes. Somehow or other, governments decided that they wanted to change it to go to actual value or market value assessment so that the taxes you paid were based on what the actual value of your home was.

I just want to say this: The reality is that a municipality knows how much money it's got to levy from municipal taxes. The issue of the actual value of the residence is

somewhat secondary to the amount of tax they need to collect. One would argue that, yes, market value assessment or actual value assessment is fairer in the sense of how we distribute those taxes. But by and large, if everybody's building is assessed at a 1970 value or a 1980 value, as long as everybody is working from the same value from the particular year the assessment was done, it's a bit of a moot point.

The municipality—for example, the city of Timmins—says, “We need \$70 million to run the municipality”—I think their budget is somewhere around \$72 million. They say, “We need \$72 million to run our municipality. We get X amount of transfers from the province and the federal government for operating capital. That leaves us with X amount of dollars”—let's say \$40 million—“that we've got to raise ourselves.” Whether you're working on 1970 values or 2006 values, it's a bit of a moot point, because all you do is change your mill rate on the value of the property to determine the amount of taxes you want the collect.

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Since the 1990s, we've basically gone through seven or eight changes to this act in order to deal with how we actually do assessments on property. I would just make this observation: I think in many ways the system has gotten more unfair, because we end up in systems where the assessment system has changed drastically from what it was in the early 1990s. For example, prior to 1997 or 1998, we used to send the assessor to your home specifically to assess the value of your property. When the assessor went to the home, they would say, “You have a three-bedroom home, and according to what we see here from the last time we did an assessment, it's brick, it's finished upstairs, the basement is done and there's no garage. Therefore, based on the 1970 value, you pay X amount of taxes,” and the municipality would apply a mill rate to get the money they wanted.

Back then, when we used to have assessors go to the door, the assessor would come and say, “You basically have the same house, but you built a garage. Therefore, based on the square footage of the garage and what a garage is worth in your municipality based on 1970 dollars, we are going to charge you X amount in assessment,” and your taxes went up commensurately with the additions you did to your building or the garage, or whatever you did. The point was that it didn't matter if it was 1970 value or 2006 value; it was based on the actual assessment of what you had on your lot based on numbers that everybody else was gauged to. So if you go out and actually do an assessment on property and buildings and say everything is assessed based on 1970 values, the system was fair. Everybody paid a commensurate amount of taxes based on what they had on their property, because somebody actually went there and did the assessment.

Now we say we're not going to send the assessor to your door anymore. We're going to basically have a system that works on a computer that says that if you're in the town of Kapuskasing and you live in this particular

area, and somebody has sold one house in the year, and it's the only house that's been sold, and the house has been sold at 30% over the actual value, then everybody gets a 30% increase in their assessment. That's how the system works now, because it's based on computer modeling; not sending out the assessor to the door but looking at the real estate transactions in that municipality and that neighbourhood to say, “Here's what the building was worth. What was it sold for?” If you're in a neighbourhood where somebody got lucky and sold their building for 30% more, for whatever reason, all of you are charged 30% additional on your actual value assessment when it comes to the end of the year. I think that's grossly unfair. In fact, in our community we've had to send the assessment office—or whatever they're called nowadays, because they've been changed—back into places like Schumacher. I know we've had to send them back into Kapuskasing. We had to send them back, I believe, to Moonbeam and a few other places, because the value of assessment that was charged against those buildings was way out of whack with what people were able to sell their building for.

An example: I live in a neighbourhood. I put a house up for sale, and somebody really wants to live in that neighbourhood; it's the only house available. Basically, somebody is prepared to pay whatever the price is, so they pay 20%, 30% more than it's actually worth. Everybody's taxes go up. I think that's unfair. We need to have a system where we have the assessors go out on the street and do the actual assessment so we're able to take a look at what is different about this house from the time we originally did the assessment. Have there been improvements—siding, anything that's done—in order to increase the value of the house? If so, you do an adjustment on the assessment, based on the actual value of what the assessment brought in. If you base that on 1970 dollars, 1996 dollars or 2006 dollars, it's somewhat irrelevant, because at the end of the day the municipality will adjust the mill rate to get the amount of money they need, based on what their needs are. So if the town of Kapuskasing needs X millions of dollars to operate and the value of the assessment is based on 1970 values, it really has no bearing on how much money they're going to get in the end, because all they do is increase the mill rate. As far as everybody else is concerned, the assessment is equally the same.

The problem we have now is that the assessment is based on the sale value, and what you can sell your house for and what I can sell my house for are two totally different things. I think that's one of the weaknesses of the system. One of the things that we need to do is go back to actual assessments on properties so that we're actually comparing apples to apples and not apples to oranges. That's the problem we've brought into the system.

In the closing couple of minutes I have in this debate, I would only say a couple of things to the government, and I concentrate on those two things. Number one, I really believe we need to go back to a real assessment where

the assessors are out doing the actual inspection of the property to determine what the value is, rather than trying to model it on a computer model of who sold the building and how much it sold for, because those can sometimes be quite erroneous.

A good example is, I'm out at the Kamiskotia Lake where our cottage is, and a couple of years ago, values of properties were pretty darned low because people weren't buying cottages. There was not a lot of work out there. Mining in my community has been fairly well-to-do over the last three or four years, and as a result there's a bigger demand for property, so of course the property value goes up; it throws up the value. But there's no guarantee, at the end of the day, that I'll be able to sell the property for what I paid, because it's based on what the market conditions are. All I'm saying is that I'd rather have everybody assessed based on a certain value that is comparable to everybody else, rather than doing it on computer modeling.

The other thing I would say, and would really strongly suggest to the government, is that this whole idea of charging actual value assessment on properties that are in unorganized territories is blatantly unfair. It's a bit of a different thing if the government was to come to me and say, "This is the person's sole home." Then there's a bit of an argument to do it, but not to the degree you charge in a municipality, because if I choose to build my house on Wandering Lake in No-Name Township with no municipal services, where I have to put in my own well, I have to put in my own septic system, I have to plough my own road—a lot of times I have to build my own road—I don't have electricity and have to bring hydro in at my cost, it is not fair to charge those people the same amount of taxes you charge somebody living in a municipality who is able to receive the full services a municipality has. To treat unorganized territories the same as a municipality is wrong, and we should rethink that particular approach, because at the end of the day it's blatantly unfair. The government needs to rethink that.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you. It's been a pleasure to be able to bring these issues forward, and I look forward to comments by members.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Mario Sergio (York West): I have enjoyed the discussion from both sides of the House on Bill 151, which is nothing more than the Budget Measures Act. If we look at the last three years, I think the bill presents a good case, not only for what we have done and what we have accomplished, but also for what our leader Premier McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party have put on the table to accomplish on behalf of the people of Ontario.

We have initiated many things, especially with the municipalities of Ontario and the city of Toronto: not only issues that were mentioned during the election campaign, but also, various ministers have been very busy making sure that what was important to various municipalities indeed took place.

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I have to commend the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. There were two very important bills which were put forth. They were debated, we had public hearings, they went to the House and indeed were approved. One was the City of Toronto Act and the other one, with the blessing of AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, was with respect to the various changes to the Municipal Act. There were some things that were very long overdue, and I think we have taken a very blunt attitude and said, "We have to do it. It's got to be done." We had considerable debate on that. Finally, we brought it to the House and it went through.

Those are just some of the things we did on behalf of the various municipalities and the city, and I'm very pleased that we did that.

Mrs. Munro: I'm pleased to be able to offer a couple of comments on the speech given by the member from Timmins-James Bay. The question of the government making the decision with the unorganized territories is certainly one that requires a great deal of discussion and debate. This would be schedule Z.2.

He made some reference to the fact that the previous government had looked at the issue of the unorganized territories. I think it's important to note that, at the time, this was also in the context of organizing and providing a level of service in regard to public health delivery and issues around that.

I also recall that there is a problem in the sense that sometimes when people move into these areas, they may initially have the sense that this is a frontier and they're going to be able to manage on their own, but there is also a danger of attracting more people to come and take up a part-time lifestyle that sometimes spreads over into a full-time lifestyle.

More important in this bill is the fact that the money the government is contemplating will in fact come to Queen's Park. It will not be directly available to the community at large in the immediate vicinity.

Mr. Hudak: I'm pleased to commend my colleague from Timmins-James Bay on his remarks on the proposed Bill 151. He made a significant contribution with respect to schedules Z.3 and Z.2, which would be the Provincial Land Tax Act and of course the consequential repeal.

The member from Timmins-James Bay would know of what he speaks. He represents a considerable area that would fall into the definition of "unorganized territory." In fact, he would probably have the second-largest riding in Ontario, which would rival the size of many countries. I know Mr. Hampton says Kenora-Rainy River is the size of France, and you would be the size of Spain?

Mr. Bisson: I'm the size of France and he's bigger.

Mr. Hudak: In that large geographic area, M. Bisson represents a number of municipalities, a significant number of First Nations communities, a heck of a lot of crown land and a lot of unorganized area. Of course, the definition of "unorganized" means that they don't have what we in southern Ontario have in terms of the tradi-

tional municipal structure. We would drive from one municipality to another and all would have all their elected mayors and councils and such, but in large parts of M. Bisson's riding, that's not the case.

He spoke quite well about the lack of services that exist in these areas to support members' homes or their cottages or some businesses that exist in unorganized areas. He made a strong case of concern with the section of the act that would effectively bring in municipal taxation in that area. I know we share many of the concerns about where this money is actually going to go to. So you increase their taxes substantially, it's all going to come down to the provincial treasury, and how do we know it will actually go back to benefit people in northern Ontario?

Mr. O'Toole: I'm pleased to respond to the member from Timmins-James Bay. He always brings everything relevant to the area he represents, as mentioned by the member from Erie-Lincoln. I think that's important, that members keep that in focus. He talked to some great extent about mining and the importance of how robust that's been over the last three to four years. It could be said that the member from Erie-Lincoln played a role in making sure that there were the right kinds of rules in place to make that industry and that resource sector so valuable and so important to the north and to the economy of the north, and indeed to the economy of Ontario.

I'm looking forward to speaking myself on this bill, and I have some comments with respect to some of the schedules under Bill 151. That's really the essence here, making sure of the right tax policies for the economy. There's a time to eliminate the red tape and look at tax thresholds, because without the economy, many of the other questions are rather rudimentary. If you don't have the economy, a lot of the other things become quite at risk and very fragile. I think the member spoke very well for his riding and for his party, recognizing that the economy in any government is so important. As our member from Erie-Lincoln pointed out, there are some signs on the horizon, but this may be an indication that the fundamental tax policies of the McGuinty-Sorbara government may be at some risk, looking forward. Many of the media reporters on the economy are somewhat suspect. As Minister Flaherty said today in Ottawa, we've got to keep an eye on the timekeeper, the taxman.

I look forward to making a few comments on this, but I always appreciate the member from Timmins-James Bay. He always works very hard for his riding and for his party.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to the member for Timmins-James Bay, who has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Bisson: I want to thank the honourable members for their comments. I am not quite sure what the government members were getting at. I wasn't complimenting the minister in his work as Minister of Municipal Affairs on this issue. Quite frankly, I was saying quite the opposite. So I'm not sure what that was all about. To my

good friends in the Conservative Party, I want to thank them for their comments.

In the last couple of minutes I've got left, I really need to say this: What drives people absolutely over the deep end is having—people understand that they've got to pay taxes for service. They reluctantly pay that, and we all accept that. I live in the city of Timmins and I've got to pay my \$2,800 or \$2,600, which is pretty cheap compared to most other places when it comes to municipal taxes. My wife and I scratch the cheque out a couple of times a year, because it's done every six months or every four months or whatever it is. We do it. Like everybody else, we understand, but we understand also that we get services. There are bus services, paved streets, water, sewers, arenas, all kind of services that our family can enjoy. But when you're living in No-Name Lake in Wandering Township and you've built a camp and you're basically deciding to live in that particular camp, you've made a lifestyle choice that's very different. In fact, you know you're not going to get municipal services. That's why you chose to go there. To say to somebody living on No-Name Lake in Wandering Township that they've got to pay taxes for municipal transit, water and sewers, dump services, paved roads, arenas and everything else, the reality is they don't get that, and people are going to go absolutely ballistic if they've got to pay taxes for services they're not taking.

I'm just saying to the government members on the other side, you should rethink this. This is a bad idea. It's one that previous governments have looked at, one that previous governments have turned their backs on, and for very good reason, because it's taxation without representation.

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The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Berardinetti: It's a privilege to have an opportunity to speak to Bill 151, An Act to enact various 2006 Budget measures and to enact, amend or repeal various Acts.

I'll start off by saying that one of the most important things I've realized is that—

Mr. O'Toole: How's your wife's campaign going?

Mr. Berardinetti: The member for Durham asks me how my wife's campaign is going. It's going very, very well. I will talk about that later. There are a number of issues in her campaign that touch on this budget, actually, because the city of Toronto is, of course, heavily, heavily attached in many ways to the province of Ontario. Michelle, my wife, is doing quite well. Hopefully, when she gets sworn in on December 1, the member from Durham can attend the swearing-in and be there, if all things go well.

Mr. O'Toole: That's a conflict of interest. You're going to be downloading—

Mr. Berardinetti: The province has been uploading, by the way, and that's something that previous governments didn't do; they downloaded. But the uploading has been something good.

I'll get to what I want to say tonight. Bill 151 contains a number of provisions that are designed to help create a healthier, more productive business climate in Ontario. The legislation inside here proposes to create a new, enhanced dividend tax credit to encourage investment in Ontario corporations, enhance the interactive digital media tax credit, and introduce a number of other measures that, alone or in combination with other initiatives, will help sustain a more vibrant and prosperous economy.

Building and sustaining a prosperous economy is the goal of every government in the land. Anywhere you look in the world, countries want to have a strong economy. When they have a strong economy, they have a happy population, and that population is able to do things that they would otherwise not be able to do. That cuts across the board.

I want to point out that our government has taken a somewhat broader approach, an approach that many others—academics, economists and experts alike—would support. In addition to using the policy levers available to this government on taxation, on the economy, on the fiscal side of the ledger, we are also making a series of historic investments that are essential to a strong economy.

In our first budget—I remember it quite well—the focus was on health care. In our second, we tackled post-secondary education and training. In our third, infrastructure was the centrepiece. In each of these budgets there were other measures implemented as well. However, it's important to recognize, and I can assure you that this government does recognize, that these investments do more than simply create new spaces and new opportunities. Just as important as the bricks and mortar are to these investments, these changes that we are making help to advance Ontario's competitive edge.

Allow me, if you will, to take a moment and cite the successes of the province and you'll see all these different areas that we've tackled in the past three years.

In our first priority, which was health care, when we came into office Ontario's health care system was on life support. Our government is building new opportunities for Ontarians to achieve better health. We have made major investments—and I've seen it in my own riding and throughout Toronto and other parts of Ontario—in keeping Ontarians healthy, in improving access, in shortening waiting times for key services, in modernizing our health infrastructure and in focusing on efficiency and accountability. I've heard from countless individuals who have said, "You know, in the past it would have taken me so long to get a hip operation or so long to get cataract surgery done, but now these things are being done a lot quicker." A lot of people, especially seniors, are happy with this.

Another priority is education and training. We're increasing grants for student needs, the money that school boards use directly to fund their operations. Once again, I remind the members of the results we've seen: more teachers, smaller class sizes, higher test scores and improved school buildings. We're not all the way there, but we're slowly and surely moving towards improving the

education system. I can think of improvements that have been made in my riding, but I can think of improvements that still need to be done in my riding on some of the schools. St. Agatha's is one in particular. I know those who are watching are waiting for those changes to occur.

Reaching Higher: We put in \$6.2 billion as an investment in post-secondary education and training, and it's benefiting our students and our society. Here again, we're seeing real results.

We've announced a jobs and renewal strategy, which was enhanced in our fall economic statement, to build opportunity for laid-off workers through effective and relevant skills training and employment services. We have focused on literacy, skills training and apprenticeship to ensure that our workforce continues to have what it needs for success. The fact alone that we've allowed for more loans and more grants than ever before, I think, is a tremendous help to students, and I've talked to so many young people who have gone back to school, who are pursuing post-secondary education, and don't have to be burdened with large student loans. Speaking of my wife just for a second, back in her day, when she went to university in 1995, in the years of Mike Harris, she accumulated tremendous debt from student loans. We're still paying them off to this day. So we all have our concerns. The member earlier spoke about the cottage issue and the property taxes on cottages, but what about the student loans that were sort of imposed on just one group or one class of students who happened to be going through school at the time when Mike Harris was really ratcheting up the tuition fees, allowing less or no student grants and very high interest on the loans? Because the loans are quite high in interest.

Another priority that I am very proud of is our infrastructure. This year, the McGuinty government announced Move Ontario, a \$1.2-billion investment in the province's infrastructure. This major historic initiative will support transit across Ontario and especially in the greater Toronto area, and it will improve municipal roads and bridges throughout the province to complement ReNew Ontario. We have a very aging infrastructure throughout Ontario—old bridges, old roads—and here in Toronto I can think of countless examples. One need only look at the news the past few days where a water main broke and affected a great part of northern Scarborough. So we need to continue to invest in our infrastructure.

I'm proud of what our government has accomplished so far. We've invested in our people and in our communities. As I said before, we are seeing the results, and I personally am seeing those results. Our economy has performed well. It has created more than a quarter of a million jobs since October 2003.

In conclusion, this budget bill builds on the strengths of its predecessors and on the strengths of the people of Ontario. I remember our Minister of Finance saying back when he introduced his first budget that this was only part one of what would be a four-part plan, and sure enough, he's kept true to his promise and has gone

through each successive stage year by year, building on the parts of the economy that are the most important.

The bill we have here, Bill 151, seeks to create a modern tax and regulatory structure for businesses to help free them up to do what they do best; that is, to create jobs and a strong economy. I mentioned earlier, when I spoke in one of my two-minute comments, the fact that we're giving money to work on brownfield projects and special tax dividend credits to businesses to get them moving so that they work more and are more likely to stay in Ontario, because a business can simply pick up and move to another province or can pick up and move to the United States. We've seen it happen before. We want those businesses here so that the jobs are here and the investments are here, and all of the resulting help that comes from that and the resulting spinoffs are here in Ontario. It is a bill that advances our commitment to a healthier, more prosperous and more vibrant province.

I urge members to give consideration to this bill. I believe when it goes to committee it will have a healthy debate at committee and will come back for final reading here. I think it's a supportable bill and one that modernizes and brings us into the 21st century with all of the great changes that are happening so swiftly in our economy. So I support Bill 151, and I am happy to stand here today and have a few moments to make these remarks about the bill.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Hudak: I am pleased to respond to the comments from my colleague for Scarborough Southwest. Of course we wish him and his wife all the best in her municipal campaign. There's no doubt that tax assessments and property assessments are a big issue in Scarborough, which has seen skyrocketing assessments under the McGuinty government. I'm sure she's hearing about it at the doors, the assessment file.

I will again highlight the problem with the approach the government has taken. I think it is a bit disingenuous to go around and say there is an assessment freeze. That may be true for the tax year 2007, but there will be a time bomb, as I've characterized it, of three years of assessment increases, three evaluation increases, all at once hitting taxpayers, conveniently after the next election, of course, in the tax year 2009. I just don't believe that is sustainable, and I fully expect them to adjust the act and hopefully take some of the qualities of the Homestead Act and import them into schedule A.

2100

The other comment I'd make is just in reference to the current dispute between the federal and provincial governments. It seems like every time Dalton McGuinty is confronted with any kind of challenge in the province of Ontario, he points at somebody else, usually the federal government, maybe sometimes George Bush, previous governments, whether us or—you do recognize, though, that he never uses Bob Rae anymore, right? They never point at the Bob Rae government. It was the NDP government or what have you; it's not the Bob Rae government anymore. But you wonder why the guy

wanted to be elected Premier of the province of Ontario if he doesn't have the backbone to take on some of the real and pressing issues. To see him blaming the debacle he's created in Caledonia on the federal government defies comprehension. I do wish that the Premier now, as we approach day 250 of the crisis of Caledonia, would show some modicum of leadership.

Mr. Bisson: I was kind of looking forward to making some comments on your presentation. From what I'm seeing in my own constituency—and I'm sure it's the same in everybody else's constituency—the whole issue of assessment in the tax system as it applies to property owners in our municipalities is getting to be a pretty difficult one. In the municipal elections in the constituency I represent, this is becoming a bigger and bigger issue. Seniors are feeling they're in a crunch. They don't have the income they used to have to maintain their homes. Pensions are not what we would like them to be. Most people who work nowadays don't have a pension. It's not like it was before, where somebody worked at Chrysler or GM or Falconbridge or Pamour—and at Pamour the pension wasn't even big—for 30, 35 years and ended up with a decent pension. You don't see that. As seniors are in their golden years after retirement, they're finding it more difficult to maintain their homes. One of the reasons for that is skyrocketing utility costs—electricity, natural gas—and municipal taxes. A number of those issues are within the purview of the provincial government. On the assessment issue, we really need to start to think about how we're going to deal with making sure that seniors can afford to hold on to their homes in their retirement years on municipal assessments that are going through the roof.

I couldn't believe it. I was talking to some people up in Moonbeam who are paying municipal assessments on—voyons—Remi Lake. It's funny how you forget names all of a sudden. But that's a whole other debate; it happens when you get a little bit older, trust me. Anyway, at Remi Lake they're paying assessments of \$4,000 and \$5,000 and \$6,000. What do you do if you're retired and you're living on an income of \$30,000 a year and a quarter of your income is to pay your municipal taxes? It gets to be pretty difficult.

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I am certainly pleased to have a few moments this evening to make comments on the presentation made by my seatmate, the member from Scarborough Southwest. A comment was made here this evening about Michelle Berardinetti running as a councillor. Knowing the stellar performance of this gentleman in his service to his community, I think there are great opportunities for Michelle to be that representative, and I wish her well. She has certainly seen a government.

The member talked about funding and supports to students, students who may not have the resources to get to college, to get to university. I think it's wonderful that we as a government have taken it upon ourselves to renew those grant opportunities. As an example, I know I would never have made it to teachers' college in 1968 if

it hadn't been for a grant. Growing up in a family of 12 kids, we just didn't have the money. There were supports there to help out, and then later on, for that opportunity to go to university as I was teaching.

The member from Scarborough Southwest also made a comment about health care. It was just last week that I met a constituent in my riding who made a comment about wait times. He was telling me that he had carpal tunnel done, from diagnosis of a problem to completion of the operation, in one week. He said this wasn't a hip or a knee replacement, but it was an operation; it was work in health care. He said, "If this is what is happening as a result of what your government is doing, good for you. Keep doing that." I think that's what this is all about. That's what the member from Scarborough Southwest talked about, and that's what I'm happy to support.

Mr. O'Toole: I heard a different message from the member from Scarborough Southwest. The reason I say that is that the implication of the story about he and his wife was some sort of disagreement about a prior member of council who got a Liberal appointment. It got a little bit dicey; he took exception to that, and Mr. Berardinetti had a verbal altercation with someone at a public meeting. That is emblematic or symptomatic, after a short time here, of their entitlement approach to things. I think the member from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh was basically trying to cover up a bit of the dust there, and I understand that.

What he should have talked about, quite frankly, was the municipal property tax assessment. People in modest areas of Toronto or Durham region or Erie-Lincoln or York region, wherever it be, are all suffering. If someone were to look at the benefits of the member from Erie-Lincoln's Homestead Act, they would soon realize that all parties, including the NDP, are seized with this issue. Let's own up to it. What the Liberals have done is that they've locked it into a little box and punted the box beyond the next election so no one is going to talk about it. All of a sudden, a time bomb is going to open up right after the next provincial election in 2007. Your 2008 assessment and the resultant tax implications are going to hit like a time bomb. That's what the member should have been talking about. That's what his wife should be talking about. If she's on the David Miller team, you can expect to pay more and get less. I am waiting for his two-minute response to cover the tracks of his remarks in the public meeting and to explain where he's going.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Scarborough Southwest has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Berardinetti: I want to thank the members from Erie-Lincoln, Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, Timmins-James Bay and Durham.

This budget in front of us today, Bill 151, is a continuous process in the plan that was laid out by the Minister of Finance several years ago. I'm proud to be part of it. Yes, there are problems with taxation, and I can say that in my own household. We've seen property tax increases of 3% in each of the last three years, which goes up to 9%. That is too high.

By the way, just as an aside, my wife is definitely not part of the Miller team; she's running on her own. So we've clarified that. In terms of any passionate comments at any public meeting, what we're trying to do is make sure that facts are facts. When people stand up and start calling someone names, then you need to stand up. If anyone in this House was called a name, they would have the right to respond to that.

But the more important thing in front of us today is this bill. Bill 151 is something that brings us into the 21st century, brings those tax incentives and tax initiatives that will help the businesses. When you get the businesses going, you get employment. Look at what has happened with Toyota and even with Honda expanding their operations in Ontario. They want to be here in Ontario, not in the United States and not elsewhere, because the ground is fertile here and they know they can do well in this area. We continue to attract new high-tech business into Ontario, and with that we bring in skilled workers and other benefits, because with that comes new houses that have to be built and new infrastructure and a whole new Ontario that is better for all of us.

2110

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. O'Toole: It's late in the evening, and I know there'll be some liberty extended to my comments with respect to Bill 151. I'm going to start off quite succinctly by recognizing the birthday of our member and our critic from Erie-Lincoln. He's certainly under 50 and certainly over 30. He's a very brilliant and dedicated critic. I just know that come 2007, we'll hear great things from him in more than the theatrical sense. He'll provide a lot of entertainment but a lot of comment. In fact, as members of the John Tory caucus, we've been extensively briefed—and cautioned, I might add—on Bill 151. Most of what I'm going to say tonight is a tribute, not in any way flattering the member from Erie-Lincoln, but recognizing the summation he gave us of a very extensive bill.

This bill is really what I would call, by any measure, an omnibus bill.

Mr. Hudak: Ominous.

Mr. O'Toole: Ominous as well. Here's the deal: The briefing notes I've got—and I have to admit that to the viewing public tonight, those who aren't sleeping. This bill has 35 schedules, according to our critic's analysis, and I mean thorough—he's been briefed by Ministry of Finance officials.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): Read them out.

Mr. O'Toole: Well, I intend to. I have very limited time, so I'm a little opposed to the interruptions here.

The schedules go all the way from A to Z, Z.9. So this bill is riddled full of surprises, and I'm going to briefly read the roughly two-page briefing note that was provided by the member from Erie-Lincoln. I'm going to read it almost word for word. So you have to be patient with me.

"Consequent changes include the re-establishment of an annual assessment after"—listen to this—"after the next provincial election," which is covered in schedule

A, and I'll deal with that. Imagine that. See, all of these announcements they're making are all post-dated cheques, "The cheque's in the mail" kind of stuff. The Minister of Education did a billion-dollar announcement on new capital. You should know that announcement is post-dated. All of the school boards are entitled to borrow money, develop a plan for their growth and finance it—and we'll get back to you on how we're going to pay for it.

There's a new audit/oversight mechanism called the Canadian Public Accountability Board, schedule D, and a reassessment scheme for land in unorganized territories, as the member from Timmins—James Bay was alluding to. All governments, I should tell you, over the 25 years I've had the privilege of serving, be it municipal, school board or the provincial level—all governments of all stripes for over 20 years have tried to define the problem of how to generate revenue at the municipal level to pay for what services. I have a report on my desk. I'm very interested in this whole issue of assessment and municipal services. We are certainly not without fault. As a member of the Harris-Eves governments, I would say we tried relentlessly to deal with finding the right tools for assessment and property classes, as well as regulating the standards for service level at the municipal level. Some people called it by different names, but we were trying to find the municipal balance. There were cities in Ontario under that time of the Municipal Act that were spending more for services and providing more services, whether in social programs or public transit, whatever, than areas of northern and rural Ontario were able to provide because they had a very weak and fragile assessment base.

The NDP had a plan, and I think it was called the disentanglement report or the Fair Tax Commission. We had one called the Who Does What commission. I challenge the government to admit to the people—our leader, John Tory, brought it up as an opposition day motion—to be honest with the people of Ontario and say, "Look, this is a complex problem of what services are provided and what revenue sources pay for those services," while at the same time the province is dictating so many firemen per 1,000 people and so many police etc. They're providing these requirements of service levels. But I digress.

In addition to the Budget Measures Act, as I'm discussing, other legislation resulting from the 2006 budget include Bill 82, the Supply Act, which has already received royal assent—another large and complex bill.

But in the very few seconds that are left, I am going to read out just some of the schedules, all of which are interesting to me.

Schedule A—Assessment Act—is establishing an assessment freeze until after the election. I won't go into it any more than that; that's another surprise waiting for you.

Schedule B—Auditor General Act—redefines "crown controlled corporation"; includes a corporation's members of the board; an additional \$20 million to pay these board members, basically patronage appointments.

Schedule C—Business Regulation Reform Act—is allowing for the sharing of business identifiers and other business information with the government of Canada. I'd probably support that act.

Schedule D—Canadian Public Accountability Board Act (Ontario), which is involved with the trading of securities. I support that bill.

Schedule E—Capital Investment Plan Act—removes the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. That's a taxable issue, and probably a housekeeping kind of issue.

Schedule F—Community Small Business Investment Funds Act—permits eligible investments to be made until 2010. We actually started that under the LSIF, labour sponsored investment funds, and community investment funds. There's nothing new here. They are extending it by one year—no surprise.

Schedule G—Corporations Tax Act: This is important. I want to pause for a second. This causes me concern, and the people of Ontario should be concerned. If you read this one, it replaces reference to Canadian investment income and foreign investment income with a reference to an aggregate investment income. But in that same schedule—surprise, surprise—the term of office of municipal politicians and school board trustees is extended from three to four years. Why would they put it in that section? Why would they be so obfuscating in terms of trying to not be completely transparent, as they said they would, and shove it into this schedule G? It causes me to be suspicious from here on.

Schedule H—Development Charges Act: Here is another one. It not only exempts any provincial stuff from development charges—and this particularly deals with the Toronto-York subway extension; it exempts it from the 10% requirement of contributing to the development charges, even though they're taking land that would have otherwise been developed and paid development charges. They're taking revenue from the municipalities.

Schedule I—Employer Health Tax Act: It is extended. The employer health tax, which was deemed in one budget to be phased out, is now being extended.

Schedule J—Financial Administration Act—permits the Treasury Board to authorize and direct ministers to pay interest after March 31, 2007, upon late payments. I support that section.

Here's another one: Schedule K—Fuel Tax Act—imposes penalties on exporters not registered under the act. I would support that. Everyone should pay their fair share.

Schedule L—Gasoline Tax Act: Here is another one. It's actually a tax grab, that one.

Schedule M—Highway Traffic Act: This is interesting too. It provides that fees for renewal or validation of permits or the renewal of licences may include a portion for the recovery costs related to highway infrastructure. Signal here: Listen up, viewers. In schedule M, you're going to pay more tax for your licences and other privileges of driving. And they said they were going to roll back the toll on Highway 407. The toll has actually gone up, not down.

This government here in these schedules, all the way down to schedule Z.9—this needs to be examined, and I would encourage people to call their MPPs and have them explain it in detail, because when I see a Liberal budget I see taxes going up and service going down. I don't care if it's social housing, social programs, health care, education, you name it. This government has raised the benefit for patronage appointments by \$20 million. They've expanded the board for LCBO. These are not transparent transactions. These are the very things that the federal government lost power for. I think the Dalton McGuinty government, after three years, already shows signs of that kind of tainted delivery of service and the insatiable appetite for more tax revenue out of your pocket.

2120

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Quite clearly, the member hasn't read the bill. I think we'd have to print it in crayon to help him have an understanding—clearly a limited understanding of financial matters.

Interjection: Resign.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: He should resign. In fact, the member admits how his government screwed up the property tax assessment system in this province. Seven bills; not one, not two, not three, not four, not five, not six but seven attempts to try to fix one mistake after another. The member admits it in his comments, and here we are today having a complete review of the system. It's funny, the member says in his comments that they made some different financial arrangements with municipalities. He tried to dress it up in some language. He called it "disentanglement" and "who does what." Hooey. It's downloading. You downloaded all of these things onto municipalities, on to local ratepayers.

The member is completely unrepentant for the hardship that he has caused seniors, that he has caused the people of Durham. I would like to hear this member apologize to the people of Durham for downloading public transit onto the hard-working taxpayers, the ratepayers of Durham. I'd like to hear him apologize for downloading those social services onto those hard-working ratepayers in Durham.

I'd like to hear even a modicum of a plan. Now, of course, he references the very capable member from Erie-Lincoln. I have great affection for him. He wrote him a note. I'm sure he had to write it in very big type so that the member from Durham would be able to read it, understand it, digest it. The member said, "Call your MPP." People of Durham, don't call the member for Durham, because he hasn't read the bill.

Mr. Martiniuk: It's my pleasure to comment on the remarks of my friend and colleague the member for Durham. It's quite an exciting night. My colleague the member for Erie-Lincoln is having his birthday. I also got to hear, although admittedly it was too short, my friend from Durham speaking once again. I think he must hold the record for speaking in this House since 1995, or one of the records.

His comments should be a concern to everyone in Ontario. As was mentioned by him and my friend from Erie-Lincoln, everyone always thought that Mr. McGuinty, Premier McGuinty, was the education Premier. That's what he keeps boasting about. And of course health care, he said, was always his priority. How is it that if we take everything except health care and education, the priority seems to be—they're going to increase that budget by 21%, according to this budget bill. What happens to education and health care spending? They both go down. We can talk about words all we want, but we just have to look at the results. When we have emergency services closing in the region of Waterloo, a community of half a million people with the lowest unemployment rate in Canada and we don't have adequate emergency care, we can see where this government's priorities lie.

Mr. Bisson: I am mortified. The government members across the way are trying to say that my good friend the member from Durham didn't read the bill. I know he read the bill. I know the member from Durham. I was sitting next to him. I looked at—give me your bill. I've got to say—look at this. I look at this bill; it is full of pencil marks. There are drawings; there are notes; there are annotations. This guy read the bill. For you across the way to all of a sudden say that the honourable member from Durham didn't read the bill is preposterous, because I know that in fact he did read the bill. If I had my glasses, I'd be able to tell you—where did my glasses go? I'm in trouble. Look at this. There are notes, handwritten notes. And look at this. There are all kinds of—I have to call them squiggles because I can't see a thing. Well, look at this here, in all the various schedules of the bill. He's got notes in regard to what is in the bill. He's got writings, he's got words, and he's got numbers. He's got all kinds of things that say that this member read the bill.

So I say to the members across the way, you should be very careful about accusing the honourable member from Durham of not having read the bill because I've got the evidence, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, that the member from Durham read the bill. He understands the bill, he's written about the bill, and what he spoke to was in great knowledge about the bill, and that is that people are feeling that this government broke their promise, during the last election, when Dalton McGuinty said to the cameras, "Read my lips. I won't raise your taxes." Well, that wasn't the case. Mr. McGuinty got elected and he did raise taxes. This bill basically does that.

I say to the member from Durham, if I had my glasses, I would read all your notes on this bill, probably a two-hour speech.

Mr. Delaney: I read the bill too, and I kept looking through the bill. I've known the member for Durham for some time, and I thought, have we been reading the same document? Apparently we haven't.

But I'd still like to bring this bill back home to the things that really matter for the people that I represent in Mississauga West. As I said in my remarks earlier

tonight, there is not one or two, but three new schools in western Mississauga that stand as a testimonial to spending money the way it should be spent on education. Following a government that put a moratorium on building schools, we're building schools, we're opening schools. In a few weeks, Minister Cansfield and I are going to be breaking ground on something that I promised to the people of western Mississauga, and that's a new GO train station. We're going to be opening the Lisgar GO train station on time and on budget. And we're going to be opening phase 2 of the Credit Valley Hospital on time and on budget, exactly as promised to the people of western Mississauga.

You can talk all you want about what's abstract and what you believe, but the reality is that we're doing what we said we'd do, and we're getting it done on time and on budget, and running Ontario properly. That's what's going to take this government and re-elect it.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Durham has two minutes to reply if he chooses to do so.

Mr. O'Toole: I'm pleased that some members recognize that when you have a bill that's presented by the Liberal government, often if you read even the preamble, you'll know that what it signifies are tax increases. But the member from Timmins—James Bay—I would acknowledge that he had had glasses earlier but he doesn't now—would have been able to comment on some of the remarks I made. The member from Cambridge is quite frank, in that I do take this quite seriously, and the mem-

ber from Mississauga West is surprised that perhaps he hasn't read the bill as well.

But I would only say in conclusion that with all of the schedules, with 35 different schedules, and as well, extending it into numerous other statutes that will cause the people of Ontario to be nervous when they look forward, if you look at the indications on the economy and the horizon now after three short years, there is trouble on the horizon: Every hospital is in deficit, every school board has spent their reserves, and if the economy shrinks by one point of the GDP, you're down a billion dollars, \$600 million on the revenue side and about \$400 million on the expenditure side.

I was fortunate to spend some time in the Ministry of Finance for a couple of years as parliamentary assistant. So I can see that the government is a little nervous. In fact, they're somewhat arrogant in some of their remarks or responses to the things I said, which reaffirms for me that they are worried.

This budget is a deliberate attempt, by even some of the schedules I mention, to hide from the people of Ontario that the real intention of this large, complex bill is to raise taxes and reduce services. Bill 43 is also a bill downloading responsibilities to municipalities for water.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much. It being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m.

The House adjourned at 2130.

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No. 118

N° 118

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 2 November 2006

Jeudi 2 novembre 2006



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Thursday 2 November 2006

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Jeudi 2 novembre 2006

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT (RAISING THE MINIMUM WAGE), 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI (AUGMENTATION DU SALAIRE MINIMUM)

Ms. DiNovo moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 150, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 / Projet de loi 150, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, Ms. DiNovo, you have up to 10 minutes.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): Let me start with a quote. It's from Dr. Charles Hastings, Toronto's first officer of health, founder of Toronto's first affordable housing in 1918, Spruce Court, housing that still stands today. He said, "Every nation that endorses a wage that does not afford sufficient revenue for the home, a revenue that will make possible development of a sound mind and body, is trampling on a primary principle of democracy."

Or perhaps one might cite the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which condemned our minimum wage in Ontario as "insufficient to enable workers and their families to enjoy a decent standard of living."

In 1989, all parties in Canada agreed to eradicate child poverty by 2000. Campaign 2000 still works tirelessly to hold us all to that promise despite the fact that child poverty has doubled in Ontario in that period of time. I rise in the House this day in their stead, representing the work of over 30 agencies in Ontario, unions and teachers' federations, children's aid societies, agencies like those represented here today: the Women's Counselling, Referral and Education Centre, the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, the Ontario Association of Social Workers, the Street Health Community Nursing Foundation and Canadian Feed the Children. Welcome.

I remember my first experience with a family that worked to be poor. Let's call it Sandra's family, who couldn't use our food bank because she worked during the week when the food bank was open. Sandra had a full-time job in a bakery, earning \$1,300 a month. Her two children, since her husband had abandoned them, stayed with friends while she worked. Sandra made less than she would have on welfare. She also needed our used clothing bank because that wasn't in her budget either. She barely made the rent every month on the \$900 apartment. But, as Sandra told me, until her English improved, she couldn't find anything else.

I thought of Sandra as I learned of Ireland, that model of economic success that accomplished their success in part by raising their minimum wage to over \$10 an hour and aiming to eradicate their own poverty, which they have in fact lessened to just 4%, something we in Ontario could only dream to aspire to with our 15% poverty level.

I thought of Sandra and Maheswary Puvaneswarran, another example highlighted in the Toronto Star, who worked two jobs and couldn't afford a sofa, as I learned that our minimum wage after deductions is actually less than welfare in this province when the cost of going to work is taken into account, the cost of child care, transportation, the loss of drug benefits. One woman with a child makes \$7.75 per hour. Even if she made \$8 an hour, that's approximately \$1,440 a month. If she were on social assistance, she would make approximately \$1,497 a month. I remember asking Sandra why she worked. "I want a better future for my children," she said.

This government prides itself on raising the minimum wage three times since being in office, at 30 cents per year. That means that in approximately seven years, Sandra and Maheswary would make \$10 an hour, which by then would be even less, in effect, than they are making now. In fact, in 1972 when our minimum wage was \$2 an hour, using the Bank of Canada's inflation calculator, our working poor were making the equivalent of almost \$10 an hour then. Our poor are poorer than they were in 1972.

One might ask oneself the economic logic of forcing single parents, two thirds of them women, onto welfare. One might ask oneself, as Charles Hastings did in 1918, how a province calling itself democratic could expect its poorest wage earners and their children to use food banks to be able to pay the rent and feed their children.

Why doesn't this government raise the minimum wage to a living wage or to the most conservative estimate of the poverty line in Ontario? The answer we're given, and Sandra and Maheswary are given, is that this will hurt the economy and actually cost jobs. Back in the 1980s, when

I was a small business owner, everyone I knew in corporate life paid our workers a minimum of \$10 an hour. Study after study has also proven that, in fact, there's no correlation between the loss of jobs and raising the minimum wage, nor of a detrimental effect on the economy. Card and Krueger's *Myth and Measurement: The New Economics of the Minimum Wage* and Goldberg and Green's *Rising the Floor: The Social and Economic Benefits of Minimum Wages in Canada* are but two examples of many studies that prove this. One needn't look to Australia, with its almost \$13-an-hour minimum wage, or France or England or Ireland, as I've already done, but simply to these studies done right in Canada to see that minimum wage raises help economies. Certainly, there is no argument that raising the minimum wage would help Sandra and Maheswary's economy and the other 1.2 million workers who make under \$10 or the 200,000 mainly immigrants and women who make minimum wage now.

We remind ourselves that the argument against the abolition of slavery was that the American economy would be destroyed if slavery were abolished. When arguments are used for the economy, I remind our honourable members what the *Toronto Star* said in its editorial of October 19 when it came out in support of this very minimum wage bill: "In effect, they are arguing that the living standards of our poorest workers must continue to suffer for them to be able to hold on to their jobs."

A higher minimum wage actually helps the economy because it allows the 1.2 million making less than \$10 an hour or the 200,000 at minimum wage to have a little bit more money in their pockets to spend. Those who are at the lowest end of the income spectrum, who can't afford cars, tend to spend their money locally in their immediate neighbourhoods. A higher minimum wage will help small business in that way, and also the increase will bring much-needed stability to employment. Any small business owner who employs minimum wage workers will tell you that it's turnover that costs the most in lost productivity, in the fees paid to agencies, in training. When workers need two or more jobs to survive, they don't work as well. Sandra used to complain about how tired she always was.

The playing field will still be level. Most small businesses compete with other businesses in the province. Since everyone will be paying slightly more, one's competitor will be paying more as well. No one will gain a competitive edge as a result of this bill.

Finally, we have examples globally of countries like Ireland, who have proven that government policies addressing this in fact help to create the economic models we should aspire to, both for business and for the poor. They have proven that poverty keeps countries and provinces poor, both economically and morally.

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But finally, the ultimate reason to raise the minimum wage is ethical, and it is also moral. Our children are paying for our current policy. Might I say—and this is not partisan when I ask how many honourable members

here would want to see their own children raised in a home where a parent tries to provide those children with food and rent and some quality of life on \$1,400 a month or less. We know that poverty is associated with lower life expectancy, worse health, impoverished chances of advancement, and crime and violence in neighbourhoods, all extremely costly to our economy and to our children. If the 13,500 children who use food banks in the GTA were our biological children, could we, would we, not do something about it? Not tomorrow, not in the seven or so years that at 30 cents a year it would take, but by acting now.

The Honourable Mr. Peters suggested yesterday that this government brought in the \$8 an hour we in the New Democratic Party had asked for, but that was almost four years ago. Must we wait another even four years for justice for the Sandras and Maheswaris? Now is already too late in a moral and ethical sense, but any later than now would be absolutely unforgivable.

To my socially conservative brothers and sisters in this House, does it make sense to pay more in real terms for someone on welfare than someone who works 40 hours a week? To the socially progressive brothers and sisters in this House, does it make sense to condemn another and much larger generation to the ravages of poverty? They know better than anyone that one cannot pay the rent and feed the kids on welfare, and now, one cannot feed the kids and pay the rent even when working full-time.

We promised, all of us and all of our parties, to end child poverty. We know it can be done. We know how to do it. Let us begin with a simple and small step. Let us make history this morning and pass this bill to raise the minimum wage to a living wage. Can we afford to raise the minimum wage? The question truly is, can we afford not to?

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa—Orléans): I'm pleased to have this opportunity to speak to this Employment Standards Amendment Act, Bill 150, that the member from Parkdale—High Park has brought forward.

On the one hand, I empathize with those holding jobs and not making a living wage—single parents, many of them young mothers, trying to raise a family on their own. In Ontario, 191,000 workers earn minimum wage. That's an awful lot of families. Many are new Canadians trying to establish their families in Canada. About another million earn less than the \$10 per hour. So I can understand the member bringing this bill forward. I think it certainly brings the issue forward in this province.

Our government promised to raise the minimum wage, and we did that. Just to go back historically, the Conservative government had it frozen for their full term in government. They cut nutritional supplements by \$37 million. They cut social supports with a 21% cut in welfare rates. The NDP period in the 1990s was not one that they could be proud of either. The Conservatives, though, made war on poor people.

We raised the minimum wage. It hadn't been changed from 1995. It was \$6.85 then, and it was \$6.85 in 2003. On February 1, 2004, it was \$7.15; in 2005, \$7.45; on

February 1, 2006, as it is now, \$7.75. It will rise to \$8, as we had promised, on February 1, 2007.

This gradual raise in the minimum wage allows businesses, especially small businesses, to adjust. Should we freeze the minimum wage as the Conservatives had done for eight long years? Absolutely not. We must be looking at what happens after February 1, 2007. So while I support the member from Parkdale–High Park and her endeavours to help those at the bottom of the pay scale, raising the minimum wage by \$2.25 an hour would, in the long run, hurt many more low-income people than it would help.

I operated a small business for 35 years. We had from five to 100 people. Unfortunately, you have to compete as a small business. If we paid more than our competitors, we didn't get the business. We didn't get it then, and the businesses would be in the same position now. The competition is much more acute in 2006 and likely will not moderate in the near future.

As a government, we strive to keep the existing jobs in periods of low economic growth. The downturn in the United States, the offshore competition from the Third World and the high Canadian dollar all influence our job retention and creation. Higher minimum wage will surely cause job losses. As a government, we will evaluate what impacts—both positive and negative—that higher minimum wage will have and act accordingly. We have raised the minimum wage. We can evaluate the impacts of the last two to three years and propose future action.

The member's bill is well-meaning, but if more people at the lower end of the economic scale are hurt than are helped by a sudden 20% increase in minimum wage, we must consider that.

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): It's my pleasure to join in the debate today on this private member's bill put forward by the member for Parkdale–High Park, to increase the minimum wage to \$10 an hour. I certainly understand that the member for Parkdale–High Park has the best interests of the working poor in mind when she proposes this bill, but I am concerned it will do more harm than good.

I note that she is also the small business critic. I certainly suggest she consult with small businesses around the province and get their perspective on how this will affect their business and how it will affect employment in their business, particularly.

I note that the reaction in today's North Day Nugget from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, and they are certainly quite concerned. They state:

"Hiking minimum wage to \$10 an hour would hurt small businesses at a time when they're under increasing pressure from a sluggish economy to remain competitive, says the group representing them.

"To that end, the Ontario members of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business are hoping a private member's bill up for debate Thursday will die. The proposed legislation would bump minimum wage to \$10 from the current \$7.75.

"The last thing that you want is to further ratchet up costs on businesses at a time when things are beginning

to slow down," said Satinder Chera, director of provincial affairs for the federation, referring to the weakening economy and the loss of jobs in the manufacturing sector."

I note, further down in the article, that the Premier is quoted, and he states: "'You've always got to be careful when you unilaterally hike business costs on businesses,' he said Wednesday as he entered his weekly cabinet ministers meeting." That, coming from Mr. McGuinty, who, after he was elected in 2003, in January 2004, effectively increased corporate taxes for large corporations by 27% as he didn't follow through with the planned decrease, and, in fact, increased the large corporation tax to 14%. So he certainly didn't follow his own advice, and we're starting to see the slowing economy.

I remember back to the days when, some 30 years ago, I had an economics professor at Ryerson—W.H. Pope, Harry Pope—who, I might note, ran twice for the NDP, unsuccessfully both times for the nomination, I recall. In those economics classes, he would show us graphs showing that increasing minimum wage results in fewer jobs being available.

I note a study from Dr. David Macpherson, who was looking at Arizona where their minimum wage is only \$5.15, and they are looking at increasing it to \$6.75. I'll quote from it:

"This paper by economist Dr. David Macpherson from Florida State University analyzes the proposed initiative to increase the minimum wage in Arizona from \$5.15 to \$6.75 in January 2007, and index it to inflation starting in January 2008. By using Current Population Survey data and labour demand estimates, this research shows that the proposed increase will be an expensive mandate on the employers—and citizens—of Arizona. Even more troubling, this enormous expense will do little to increase the quality of life for the state's poor—and will greatly worsen conditions for those who lose their jobs following the increase.

"The poor targeting of this proposal is clear in the distribution of benefits—and burdens—that are anticipated from the increase. Nearly 70% of the benefits will go to families above the poverty line, with more than 25% of the benefits going to families with annual incomes of over \$60,000. Unfortunately, the families living in poverty will bear the brunt of the attendant job loss, with 37% of the job loss accruing to families with annual incomes of less than \$25,000. The least-skilled members in the workforce will also suffer disproportionately, with high school dropouts experiencing 29% of the job loss.

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"Overall, the minimum wage hike is projected to cause 4,627 employees to lose their jobs, causing an annual income loss of \$54.8 million for these employees. The leisure and hospitality industry will be particularly hard hit, bearing 66% of the job loss. Meanwhile, employers' labour costs would go up \$87.4 million annually. The findings reported in this paper, and the calculation of the enormous economic cost of a mandated wage increase, ought to temper enthusiasm for a minimum

wage hike, especially since the proposed initiative would confer most of its benefits on families who are not poor and impose a significant burden on those who are.”

It’s well-intentioned, but, as I say, this increase, especially a sudden increase, could do more harm than good. The fact is, a strong economy leads to higher wages.

Prior to being an MPP, I was in small to medium-sized business for many years. The fact is, when the economy booms, you have a tighter labour market and it’s a necessity that you pay above minimum wage to attract employees, especially to attract good-quality employees. So when the economy is doing better, you’re able to pay more and you have to pay more.

We need to address the other challenges that are facing the working poor. I note that the past PC government removed hundreds of thousands of working poor from paying any provincial income tax. So now hundreds of thousands of people do not pay provincial income tax, but as you start to earn more, there are huge roadblocks or stumbling blocks in the way to doing better, and we need to look at those. For example, there are very significant marginal tax increases as people and families start to earn more money. They run into some significant increases in the marginal tax rate they pay, which has the effect of keeping them poor.

We also need to do things like remove the health tax that was imposed by this government, one of the largest tax increases we’ve seen in recent years and one that the government, prior to being elected, said they weren’t going to bring in. They said they weren’t going to bring in any tax, as the Premier stated to the cameras in the election campaign.

We need to do what we can to support those who are earning minimum wage and the working poor to develop the skills to be able to increase their earning potential, to support apprenticeship programs, to support skilled training.

This past Friday, I was up at Shawanaga First Nation. I had a meeting with a councillor at Shawanaga First Nation. In talking with him, he described how his son is very keen to apprentice to be a plumber or an electrician but that he can’t find an employer to take him on because—well, we were speculating as to why he couldn’t, but I think one of the problems is that there aren’t the incentives necessary to make it worthwhile for the employers to take on these people who are keen to apprentice, keen to improve their skills. If you become a plumber or an electrician, you’re going to be earning some pretty good wages. So that’s the sort of thing we need to do to improve the skills of those who might otherwise be earning minimum wage so they can earn far, far above minimum wage.

It’s my feeling with minimum wage increases that we do need to increase the minimum wage; we need to do it, I would argue, every year. I would argue that we need to increase the minimum wage tied to cost-of-living increases, and we need to do it every year so that it’s not a shock to businesses. But bringing in a sudden increase—I don’t know what the percentage is, but probably 30%—at

one time, especially at a time when the economy is slowing, could very much hurt business and cause major reductions in the number of people employed and thereby will actually do more harm than good.

I support the intent of the member’s bill, and that is to help the working poor and those who need help, but I do feel that her bill would do more harm than good.

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto—Danforth): It’s my pleasure to rise today in support of the bill put forward by my colleague Ms. DiNovo from Parkdale—High Park.

I find it extraordinary that we’re having a debate on this—no offence to my colleague. Frankly, it makes complete sense to do what she’s proposing. She should be able to bring this in and simply have all-party consent, because it’s entirely logical and entirely reasonable.

This society here in Ontario is set up and operates in the context of a country that is amongst the wealthiest in the world, at the wealthiest period in the world’s history, and we’re squabbling and debating about whether or not we will give the poorest of our citizens what really amounts to a small but fair wage increase? I find it extraordinary. Is this society poor? Is the economy over decades in decline, or is it rising? I tell you, anyone who looks around at the BMW dealerships, at the jewellery stores on Bloor Street, at the high-end apparel stores, knows that this society is becoming richer and richer, with a 21% increase in incomes in Ontario since 1995. It is not getting poorer. But the poorest amongst us are getting poorer. They aren’t getting their fair share, and it’s the role of government—this government, we the legislators—to act on behalf of those who need to have that fair share.

There are real impacts to poverty, real day-to-day impacts in terms of people’s lives and health, in terms of safety and security, in terms of potential for people to take full advantage of all that life has to offer. I used to chair the board of health at the city of Toronto—a lot of people in municipal government have sat on boards of health—and one of the things we talked about was determinants of health: What makes people healthy? What makes a society healthy? A key part is making sure that people have an income that provides them with enough money to eat regularly and well, have a roof over their head and clothe themselves. The current minimum wage is not adequate to do that. The initiative taken by Ms. DiNovo will move us towards protecting the health of a big chunk of the population, a big part of which is children who deserve the protection of this government and the legislators in this chamber.

I want to say as well that in terms of safety and security in a society, to the extent that large numbers of people live on the edge of desperation and don’t have adequate food and shelter, you encourage the growth of vandalism, of theft, because people become angry. When people are desperate, when people are constantly uncomfortable because they’re not eating enough, when people are constantly overcrowded, you generate an anger that in the end is reflected not just within the four walls of that home but in society as a whole. If you want a safe,

secure, peaceful society, you make sure that everyone has a decent life.

I'm running short on time, and my colleagues want to speak. But I want to just note, in terms of the question of job creation, that even the Toronto Star has written, "Poverty No Way to Preserve Jobs." You know what? Ms. DiNovo and the Star are right: Impoverishment of a part of our population is not a strategy for job creation. It's a strategy that is a dead end for our society.

I urge every legislator here, no matter what the instructions are from their party, to vote in favour of this bill.

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward–Hastings): I am pleased to speak to this bill, but it is a very difficult one to speak to because I don't believe there's one member in this Legislature who is not concerned about child poverty and not concerned about their constituents and fellow Ontarians doing better. How we help those who need our help most is a very difficult issue. I have learned over the years that for every difficult question, there is usually a simple but wrong solution to it, and I believe this is a wrong solution. If I can use a phrase I like, I would describe this as the right medicine but the wrong dosage.

I'm not opposed to an increase in the minimum wage. The question is, is \$10 the right number? I'm not an economist. I read and I respect the opinions of economists. But I can reflect over my own life, and when I was 100 years younger, I did grass-cutting for people in my community. I learned that I really didn't have the freedom to set any price I wanted because if I set my price too high, there was this kid down the road who would do it a little bit cheaper than me, so instead of my making the huge sum of about 50 cents, I think it was at that time, I made nothing. I learned that the price I had to set on my work depended not on what I wanted or what I needed but on the marketplace; it depended on what the other people in my community were going to set as a price.

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I have watched since then, particularly in my own community, and have observed how everything is interconnected. There is no separate, isolated issue we deal with, even in bills we deal with here in terms of a number of other bills and other legislation and other people they affect. So I look at my own community. I can have a small factory, perhaps, that manufactures items it exports from this province or perhaps even from this country, and just down the road is a corner store. Both have my constituents employed there. It's tempting to think that the pay in those two places is not connected, that they're quite different jobs, but in fact they are connected. The salary or the wage or whatever is going to be paid at that small factory is influenced by what is being paid at its competitors in Ontario and in Canada. I would note that at \$10 an hour this province would have the highest minimum wage in Canada, which is going to create some problems when competing with others.

You know, life was much simpler when I was 10 or 15 years old, because we bought and sold and did things

within our own community and what happened on the other side of the world was not relevant to us. I can remember when we first started getting toys. If it said "Made in Japan," you knew they were junk 40 years ago, folks, but they're not junk now. Across the world, they make products that compete strongly with us. So in terms of what the employer in Belleville or in Picton is paying, he or she has to take into consideration what is being paid in China or in Venezuela or in Japan or any other country in the world. And the wage they're paying over there, which influences the wage at my factory in my community, influences what's being paid at the corner store, because there's competition for employees. There's increasing competition for employees. So we have to consider that there is a point at which industry is no longer competitive.

There was a statement made here earlier in the debate that it's the job of the government to look after our citizens, and certainly I can see that from a strong perspective. But I would suggest, more so, that it's a role of government to provide opportunities for its citizens. I have no better example of that than the Dalton McGuinty education initiatives that we have seen take place, the number of opportunities that have been created for individuals to go to post-secondary that weren't there four and five years ago. We need to create the opportunities for our citizens to be successful, but we need to ensure that we can remain competitive, because being unemployed at \$10 an hour, I would suggest, is far worse than being employed at \$8 an hour. A 25% increase in the minimum wage in one fell swoop would make life very, very difficult for businesses to compete. "Everything in moderation" is told to us from a health viewpoint, but I would suggest that applies to other things too.

I know I speak on behalf of my party in saying that we are concerned about child poverty and about incomes in Ontario, but we realize that we have to maintain a balance. We have to ensure that the opportunities are still there. If our businesses thrive, our citizens thrive, and vice versa. And I know I speak for my party when I say we are prepared to look at the minimum wage issue, but this particular bill I cannot support in its present form.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): It's a pleasure to speak this morning to Bill 150, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, introduced by the member from Parkdale–High Park. I certainly congratulate her again on winning a seat in the Legislature in the recent by-election.

I appreciate the comments made earlier by my colleagues on all sides of the House, and I'm pleased to have the opportunity to share some of my comments in addition to those that have been made by my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka.

In my riding of Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, there's a huge dependency on the success of small and medium-sized businesses. I was pleased to recognize their vital importance in contribution during Small Business Month and Small Business Week, which just recently occurred. In Kawartha Lakes alone, the largest part of my riding,

there are over 2,400 enterprises, with nearly 2,300 of those being referred to as small or mid-sized businesses, so it's quite safe to say that small business is the backbone of my riding. Most of those small entities are within the agricultural sector. My riding is the third-largest agriculture employer in the entire province, with over 9,600 full-time and 5,800 part-time employees. The relevancy of this issue is the severe impact Bill 150 will have on those vital industries, such as the agriculture sector that I mentioned. Many of the businesses are small, family-owned farms that have been part of the fabric and culture of my riding for generations. There are already too many demands on Ontario's rural and agricultural communities and businesses. According to my chamber of commerce in Kawartha Lakes, over 50 farms went out of business last year—quite a startling statistic. Downloads like the Clean Water Act, which we've seen, are just adding more weight onto the backs of rural Ontarians who are already struggling. Many of the farm owners in my riding have other jobs and other means of income; they're working off the farm to supplement the losses.

Increasing wages is one more challenge. Businesses that can't sustain this are simply going to close their doors with this sudden increase. Forcing businesses to close shop as a result of government-induced increases to wages is counterproductive. It doesn't make the least bit of sense to drive small and mid-sized businesses out of business, literally, taking jobs away.

I came across an interesting statistic from StatsCan on a minimum-wage fact sheet from 2005. It has some interesting points I'll quote. Nearly half of all minimum wage workers are in the age group of 15 to 19, and a majority of those were either in school full- or part-time. Workers in agriculture may be compensated for lower wages through non-wage benefits such as free room and board. Almost two thirds of minimum wage workers live with their parents or another family member.

We've heard about job losses with closings in the manufacturing sector. Our caucus has mentioned this repeatedly to the House. It's a huge concern for all of us—huge. When the Minister of Finance brought in his Economic Outlook last week, my colleague from Erie-Lincoln did a great presentation in the House discussing the concerns we have with respect to such growing economic uncertainty. This legislation, Bill 150, in my opinion really doesn't take to heart how much we need to be careful about artificially increasing the costs to Ontarians to run small and mid-sized businesses. The McGuinty Liberals have dramatically increased the costs for businesses since 2003, including the minimum wage increase. To saddle our businesses with more burdens isn't sustainable, and on this side of the House we don't want to see more businesses closing their doors; we don't want to drive more small businesses out of the province. It's just too difficult as it is to run a small business in the province.

I don't question for one second the fact that lower-income workers aren't good, hard-working people and

very valuable contributors to our communities. They are. These good people, often newer Canadians or Ontarians, many of them single parents, like all of us in the House, want only the best for their children.

I appreciate the member from Parkdale-High Park's intentions. There's no doubt that her commitment to help the struggling members of her community is why she is here as a member of this Legislature. But I think she would agree that most of these struggling members of our communities aren't looking for a freebie or a simple handout. What they're looking for are all the tools that will help them to succeed. That's where we as legislators step up our efforts, by providing those hard-working people with these tools. As I said, Bill 150 places too much burden on Ontario's already struggling businesses to make a handout. We can't continue to lean on the backs of our small businesses in Ontario. What we need to do is look at other support programs and some forward-thinking initiatives. Handouts aren't the answer and they never have been.

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Just last week I was thrilled to join people in my riding in the Job Connect Ontario facility. They opened their new offices. They're merging, community members working together, to find people jobs in their communities. The previous PC government brought in tax reforms for Ontario's hard-working families and took nearly 800,000 low-income earners off the Ontario income tax rolls. That's the type of forward thinking that provides a hand up.

A minimum wage increase isn't the answer by itself. We can't afford to see Ontario business saddled with an increased burden, so—

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Sorry, I can't agree with you.

Ms. Scott: That's fine. That's why we're in different parties and have different opinions in the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak this morning on Bill 150.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I stand in support of this bill and in support of my colleague from Parkdale-High Park. Where I come from is probably a very different place than most of you. I come from a place called Regent Park. That's where I grew up. Every lesson I learned in my life I learned very early. One of the lessons was that the people who went to work and the people who struggled there worked for minimum wage and they worked in crummy jobs. They worked in factory jobs, they worked in jobs where their health was at risk, where they often lost limbs, where they breathed in toxins, where everything bad happened, and they worked for minimum wage. When they left one job to go to another job, they usually left in order to try to better themselves. It might be a nickel an hour, it might be 10 cents an hour, but it was just barely above minimum wage. That's why they would leave and go from job to job. They would work horrendous hours and night shift and everything, trying to get out of that minimum-wage trap.

I looked at the small businesses and the businesses around there, and they often would compete. The biggest factor they had was trying to retain their staff, because people were forced to leave for what was in those days five cents or 10 cents an hour, and they had their problems too.

I look today: Who is it who pays minimum wage? We've heard people talking about the small business people. It is not the small business people alone who pay minimum wage. In fact most of them, if they are good small business people, know that they have to pay more than minimum wage to keep people, especially the good ones, working for them. Who is it who pays minimum wage?

The largest corporation, one of the largest in the world, is Wal-Mart. If you get this month's edition of the *Economist*—I think every Liberal should read that. Sam Walton and his descendents brag about the fact that they themselves have driven down wages in the United States by 2%. They brag about that. If you look at the Wal-Mart stores that pay minimum wage in Canada, you will see that they have horrendous practices with their employees. I won't shop in that store. Nobody can work more than five hours in a row because then they have to let them have lunch. So they don't let them have lunch. And they pay minimum wage.

When you go out to McDonald's to buy a hamburger, remember that every one of those hamburgers of one of the largest corporations that's traded in Standard and Poor's 500 is made with minimum wage.

That's who it is. That's whom we should be aiming at. If the largest corporations in this country, if the largest corporations in the world, can pay and do pay minimum wage, we should know that they are doing it on the backs of the poor, the young, the immigrants, the women and the people who are desperate to try to find the money; who work five hours at Wal-Mart and run down the street to work five hours at McDonald's, knowing they're not going to get a lunch in either, just to try to make it.

My colleague is absolutely right. We need to pass this law. I am appalled, quite frankly, at the arguments I have heard. I respect all of my colleagues but I am appalled at the arguments. The Conservatives invent the clawback; the Liberals perpetuate it. The Conservatives stop workers and farmers in agricultural big-farm communities from forming unions; the Liberals perpetuate it. The Conservatives cut welfare rates; the Liberals cut the special diet allowances. I don't know how you're any different.

If you want to help the poor, this is perhaps the only thing you can do. I beg you to make a difference to poor people. Give them a living wage; give them an opportunity to provide for themselves and the dignity that comes with a job that doesn't force you into poverty.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): Let me say at the outset that I will be supporting this bill, not only because I've represented the area of Parkdale for about 17 years, but also because I've represented some of the very same people that the new member from Parkdale-High Park

represents. Congratulations to you, belatedly, on your election.

Who would not want to discuss this issue in the Legislature? Who wouldn't want to discuss how we can share wealth, our common wealth that we're a part of, with those most vulnerable families? So this discussion is very apt. But there are some questions I would like the member from Parkdale-High Park to answer if she possibly could. The questions revolve around the issue of repercussions. Are there any repercussions if the wage is going to be raised from \$7.75 to \$10, more than 23%?

The first question I have for her would be, has the member discussed this matter with members in other provinces? For instance, Ms. DiNovo said earlier that it's true that Yukon is paying a minimum wage of \$8.50, I think it is. The Northwest Territories are paying a minimum wage of \$8.25, and Nunavut is paying \$8.25 as well.

I'm wondering, what are the repercussions if we're paying \$10 here in Ontario? They're paying over \$8 right now in the Northwest Territories, but what are the repercussions if we're paying more than they're paying? May it not be true that the reason there is an \$8.50 minimum wage in our north is in order to attract the workers there? And I'm wondering, if we were paying \$10, whether we would be attracting the same workers to stay and even attracting workers from other provinces to come to Ontario. I don't know. I'm asking her, what are these repercussions and has she thought about it?

Secondly, she says there is no relationship between the minimum wage and job losses. If that's the case, if there is no relationship between the minimum wage and job losses, then why are we stopping at \$10? Why wouldn't we continue and say we'd take the example of Australia and Ireland and other places that are saying, "We cannot stop at \$10. Why not stop at \$13 or even more?" I wonder what would be the repercussions of that. I hear other members from even our party, and certainly the Progressive Conservative Party, saying that there is a definite link between job losses and the minimum wage, no questions asked, and yet we hear that there are other places where this is indeed not the case. But I would like to find out, of course: Why stop at \$10? I would like an answer to that.

My third question in terms of what are the repercussions of raising the minimum wage to \$10—

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): And that's a guy who supports this bill.

Mr. Ruprecht: I thought I would get some support from this party on this point, but they're beginning to heckle me. I think I made a mistake right here.

But let me ask you this: Why did the NDP not raise the minimum wage by 22%, 23% or 24% when they were in power? We know for sure that the same members who are in the opposite benches right now—I'm looking into their eyes—the very same members were there. They certainly, Ms. DiNovo, could have done what you propose to do. They could have taken this same example of Australia and Ireland and said, "Yes, we will follow in

the same footsteps and raise the minimum wage to \$13.” They could have done it and they chose not to do it. Why?

The fourth question I have to ask is, and I hope she will consider that as well, and I know the NDP will consider this as well: Are there not other ways to help vulnerable families, vulnerable people? Why not link them up with the minimum wage as well?

Look at what the Liberals have done as an example.

Interjection.

Mr. Ruprecht: That’s right. The McGuinty government has invested \$10.3 billion annually for families on social services—\$10.3 billion. Families on social assistance with kids under six will keep all of the \$1,200 per year they’ll receive from the federal government.

Liberals ended the 60-hour workweek; we’ve introduced job protection; family medical leave for employees who wish to stay home to care for gravely ill loved ones; 15,000 new affordable housing units, homes and emergency shelters; 5,000 rent supplements; a 5% increase for homelessness and programs of emergency shelters; \$8.5 million for student nutrition programs, which I think is one of the most important issues—84,000 more students are being served and that’s a 45% increase in terms of nutrition in the schools; economic stability; a 5% increase in social assistance, and on and on it goes.

In short, congratulations. You’ve raised an important issue, and I will be supporting it.

1050

Mr. Marchese: The member from Davenport stands up to say he supports the bill and then enumerates a long list of reasons why he’s opposed to it, and he doesn’t even realize it. He also says the NDP didn’t do anything with the minimum wage. We raised the minimum wage in a recession, and he was here then. One wonders whether he was in fact here at the time.

It is so easy for those who are privileged to raise questions as to why the poor should not get an increase. It is so easy for Monsieur McGuinty to stand up and say, “We’d love to get it to 12 bucks, maybe even to 22 bucks, but you know there are implications on business.” There are no implications for the poor, only on business. We worry about business but we don’t worry about the working poor.

Where is the member from Davenport when you need him and all the other members in this Legislature when you need them? These members and others who are so privileged are able to sleep cosily at night in their nice homes and not worry about those who earn less than \$8 an hour. It’s so easy to be privileged, earn a good salary and sleep well at night, have good health and worry about business, while those who earn \$6.50, \$7.50 an hour have to struggle day in and day out.

We have growing food bank use in this province in a Liberal administration, as we had under a Conservative administration. The growth of food banks is happening in a good economy. Poverty is growing in a good economy under a Liberal administration and under a Conservative administration. Those who want to get into a housing

complex project where it’s affordable are waiting for the government to create it and help them with some subsidy, and that list is growing in a good economy under a Liberal administration.

The poor are less healthy than those who are privileged. We all know that. We don’t even need a study for that. We say that we need to be competitive with those economies where some of those companies pay \$2 a day. We want to compete with that? What kind of moral standards are we advocating for? When we in this country, where inflation is growing, have a problem with people just barely making enough to scrape by, how do we live with that?

So I don’t appeal to the politicians here. The Liberals will vote for this measure even though they’re opposing it today, at least those who are speaking. The people I’m appealing to are those who are watching this program, those individuals who are here today and listening to this debate. They’re the ones who have to put pressure on those privileged individuals in this House. They’re the ones who have to put pressure on business that’s unwilling to pay a living wage.

If we want to deal with poverty, don’t let the politicians deal with this. You’ve got to deal with it. You are the one who has to go in their offices and make a case as to why poverty is immoral in this country, as indeed anywhere in the world, and that we don’t compete by bringing salaries down; we compete by making sure people are earning a decent wage. That’s what keeps us human. That’s what being human is all about. If we’re not committed to that, we’re committed to the lowest common denominator of an economy that I cannot support and you, some of you, good Liberals, should not be supporting either. I hope the people listening will put pressure on this government to do the right thing and to support this simple motion for human decency, human living standards and human living wages put forth by our colleague from Parkdale–High Park.

Mr. Bisson: I really want to echo and I’d love to repeat all the things that were said by my colleagues, because I agree with Mr. Marchese and others who have spoken to this bill on the need.

The contribution that I want to make is this: I hear members on the Liberal side and I hear Conservative members saying, “We really worry about business.” You know what? The Wal-Marts of this world, the McDonalds of this world, the Beaver Lumbers, the Home Depots—they’re not the ones that you’ve got to worry about. They are large corporations; they’re not small mom-and-pop stores. Quite frankly, those people can well afford to make sure that workers are paid a living wage. For us to all of a sudden say, “Maybe we can’t do this because it’s going to hurt business”—I say that is not the case.

In fact, there are studies that have come out taking a look at this particular issue. I have but one with me here, an entire volume that has been written about the myth and measurements of the economics of the minimum wage. The conclusion of it is, you can’t afford not to,

because you know as well as I do that the person living on minimum wage spends his or her income in that local community. Who benefits? It's the small business community. If I'm making 10 bucks an hour living in Timmins on minimum wage, I go buy at mom-and-pop stores in my community. The money stays there. It doesn't go off to Bermuda in some savings account or a tax-sheltered account somewhere on the Cayman Islands; it stays in your local community. I say to members across the way, to say that you can't afford to raise the minimum wage—this is a small-business-friendly thing because, in the end, the workers will pay that money back.

The other point that we need to make and we need to be clear on is the whole issue in regard to people's ability to go to work in the morning, make a decent wage and provide for their families. What's clear is, there are other jurisdictions—the United States, which is not known as the most progressive social economy in the world, pays a higher minimum wage than we do here in Ontario. If George Bush can pay a higher minimum wage to workers in the United States, certainly to God we can, here in Ontario, treat our citizens well, the people who live in the province of Ontario, by making sure they get better than the minimum wage.

I say to my colleagues in the New Democratic Party, congratulations to my good friend Madam Cheryl—Cheri—DiNovo. Excuse me; I do that. I can't get nobody's name straight.

Laughter.

Mr. Bisson: It's an inside joke. I'm not going there.

I just say, congratulations, because this is work that needs to be done. What we do know is that minimum wage is something that affects the hardest-working people in the province when it comes to their ability to make an income. I think we need to do something to help them along.

The Deputy Speaker: Ms. DiNovo, you have two minutes to respond.

Ms. DiNovo: To sum up, first of all, to my honourable colleagues, really we're not talking about a raise in the minimum wage; we're talking about catch-up to 1972. We're talking about catch-up to what we used to pay workers in 1972 in real dollars, after inflation. That's what we're talking about: catch-up. We have built our economy on their backs. It's time to pay what's due to the workers in this province.

Second of all, I want to know how this move to raise our minimum wage to \$10 is going to hurt Sandra, the woman I talked about who is making \$1,300 a month, or Maheswary, who was making \$1,100 a month, or the 1.2 million in this province who are making under \$10 an hour. I'd like to know how it's going to hurt them. How is it going to hurt them to raise their salaries so they can pay the rent and feed their children? That's what we're talking about: feeding their children and paying their rent.

We're not alone here. As you heard Mr. Marchese say, we stand here in front of a cloud of witnesses in this province. We stand here in front of the mainly women

and many immigrants who are cleaning our businesses, who are preparing our food, who are looking after our children. How are we going to look them in the eye? I ask honourable members, how are they going to look those people in the eye and say, "I did not support a \$10 minimum wage"? Do you know why \$10 and why not \$15 or \$20? Because that's the poverty line. We're talking about bringing people up to the poverty line by working 40 hours a week.

On what ethical basis can you deny this? I want to know how every MPP votes, and I'm looking forward to the Hansard, because when we ring those bells and bring those votes in, everybody will know how their MPP voted. I say, shame on anyone who votes against this bill, absolutely.

And it's not just the women; it's their children too. Their children will be watching. So I say, please, please do the right thing. Vote—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

1100

STREET SAFETY AWARENESS MONTH ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR LE MOIS DE LA SENSIBILISATION À LA SÉCURITÉ DANS LES RUES

Mr. Kular moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 145, An Act to proclaim the month of May as Street Safety Awareness Month / Projet de loi 145, Loi proclamant le mois de mai Mois de la sensibilisation à la sécurité dans les rues.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Kular, pursuant to standing order 96, you have up to 10 minutes.

Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale): I wish to thank you for allowing me to speak today about an important issue that concerns us all. It affects all Ontarians, and that issue is the safety of our streets. Ontario's city streets are more dangerous now than ever before with more young drivers on our roads, the distractions of iPods, BlackBerries and cellphones, to name a few. The drivers today are left multi-tasking during driving. Children no longer feel safe walking across the streets in their own communities, and sadly, many youths feel that in today's society it's better to carry a gun or a knife rather than a book. On our streets there's everything from traffic accidents to kidnappings to gang violence and graffiti.

But I'm not here today to speak to you about the dangers on our streets—something we're all well aware of. I'm here today to ask that we recognize the numerous organizations out there educating the public, helping out our children and supporting our community to help our environment become safer for everyone.

The objective of proclaiming the month of May as safety awareness month is to recognize the dangers on our streets, to foster a change in our attitudes and

behaviours surrounding street safety and to prevent any further tragedies from happening. This Bill 145 would recognize all existing safety programs in Ontario, from pedestrian safety to safe rail-crossing programs. These small steps we take today will undoubtedly set priorities and standards for tomorrow and will make everyone in Ontario feel safe and secure in their own communities.

Many people do not recognize the numerous programs in place helping to make our communities safer. Ontario is fortunate to have a number of programs that help this cause. Among some of them are the Block Parent program, offering children the reassurance that they can turn to their neighbours for help. The year 2003 marked the program's 35th anniversary. The mandate of Block Parents is to provide a network of police-screened, easily recognizable, safe homes for members of the community, especially children, to turn to in times of distress.

Another organization, the Crime Prevention Association of Toronto, formerly known as Crime Concern, understands that helping reduce crime is much more than physical security, locks and alarms; it's about educating the public about safety, developing partnerships, as well as creating a connection among all communities. CPAT, like the Community Police Liaison Committee, attempts to foster a connection between the community and the police. These programs try to encourage people to safeguard against street violence by promoting safety.

Some of the other programs include Neighbourhood Watch, a program where residents report noticed suspicious activities in their communities, not only to the local police department, but also to each other. The Neighbourhood Watch program holds Neighbours' Night Out, a chance for local community residents to gather together in a casual setting and discuss with law enforcers local issues that matter to them and affect their communities.

Most recently, the Toronto Anti-Violence Intervention Strategy, with the assistance of community residents, identified problem areas where street violence is likely to occur within a community. This program helps authorities to develop a strategy to target locations and people in an effort to reduce violence and restore a feeling of safety in their own community.

Take Back the Night, another program, is also a program that is designed to increase understanding of the issues of violence against women and children on our streets. Its goal is to make our city streets safer for everyone.

MADD, Mothers Against Drunk Drivers, is a well-respected and well-known organization which aims to offer support services to victims, heighten awareness about the dangers of drinking and driving, and save lives and prevent injuries on our roads.

There are too many organizations and programs within Ontario to mention them all. Each, in its own way, contributes to changes within their communities to make their communities safe.

Very recently, there have been plans to make over crosswalks in Ontario to give drivers an early warning

stopping system and, by extension, to help save lives. It is suggested that the addition of white zebra stripes will add to safety on our streets. They are currently being considered by Toronto city council.

Over the summer, we had the chance to vote for the worst street. Suffice it to say, there were quite a few that made the list. The competition, launched province-wide, is now in its fourth consecutive year. Since its launch, the Municipal Roads Coalition has added numerous changes to our streets, including spotlighting on 46 offensive roads. By taking these safety and security measures, our streets will become safer.

Most people, unfortunately, recall Holli, the 11-year-old girl who was struck at an Etobicoke crosswalk last January. Figures show that two people die every day on Ontario's roadways and over 200 are injured due to preventable causes like distraction, drowsiness and speeding. It's unfortunate that it takes the death of a young child for us to realize that changes need to be made.

Holli symbolizes what we are trying to prevent and, one day, eliminate: death on our streets. With all the organizations and programs in Ontario, we may just one day accomplish this. With the multitude of programs dedicated to promoting street safety, there is no telling how many lives have already been saved.

In my own riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, a total of 6,157 people—both pedestrians and drivers—were involved in collisions; 16 of those were fatal. This is to say, 16 lives could have been saved.

In Brampton, we have the Safer Communities-1,000 Officers Partnership program, which is a key part of our government's plan to foster safer and stronger communities within Ontario. When the project initiated, these new officers went out to patrol our streets and help prevent crime and make our communities safer. With the help of this program, we have safer and more educated communities.

That's why I have brought this bill forward. I would like to have support from all the members of this Legislature.

1110

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto-Danforth): First of all, I would like to thank the member for bringing forward this bill. I had an opportunity to meet him in the course of travelling around Ontario on Bill 43. I thought he had some very useful observations on what we were hearing and what was going on in Ontario.

I have to say, even though I will be supporting the bill, I think the scope of the bill is a bit narrow. When we talk about crime and safety on our streets, we have to talk about a much bigger picture. Let's face it. What are the sources of crime? Simply operating Neighbourhood Watch programs—and I've been involved with them in my time over the last few decades—is not enough. Frankly, our police, as capable as they are, as well trained as they are, cannot in the end make our streets safe. Unless we deal with the roots of crime, unless we deal with the roots of other safety issues that have been raised

by the member, we aren't going to have the safety on our streets that we need, that people in this province deserve.

So I want to talk a bit first about the sources of crime, and I would hope that the member, if he's successful in bringing forward this bill, will honour not only those who fight to organize communities against crime but those who fight for food banks, who fight against child poverty, who fight for increasing the minimum wage; in fact, those who fight to address the root causes of crime. I will talk about those briefly.

Obviously, poverty contributes to crime. Anyone can look around the world and see that in situations where you have great poverty, you tend to have more theft, you tend to have more vandalism; you tend to have crimes that grow out of need and out of desperation. I've had an opportunity in the last while to talk to friends of mine in new Canadian communities, people who come here who have credentials, who have experience overseas and find that in Canada their skills, their experience and their credentials are not recognized. They tell me about the corrosive impact on their families, the loss of respect they suffer in dealing with their children because they are not able to provide as had been hoped. So one issue that has to be addressed is this whole question of ensuring that when new Canadians arrive here, they have the job opportunities and the recognition for their skills and credentials that they deserve.

Now, I'm not saying that everyone who comes here who faces hardship—I'm not saying that everyone who is born here who faces hardship—engages in crime. I think it speaks to the human spirit that it's a small percentage of the population that ultimately engages in what one could call destructive activity. But frankly, if we don't substantially address those social roots of poverty, if we don't address the difficulties faced by new Canadians, we breed destructive behaviour, we breed anger, we breed desperation and thus we breed things like vandalism, theft and drug addiction.

Racism: Racism in this province, in this country, is soul-destroying. Look at what happens to many black youth who are disproportionately unemployed in this province, disproportionately unemployed in other parts of Canada. For them, it means that they don't see a route ahead that takes many of them to a secure future, to an established home, to a career they can be proud of, and it opens the door for them to be exploited by those who are drug dealers and who offer a way of life that results fairly quickly in money coming in, even if that money comes in by way of drug dealing. People are forced into a corner through racism, and although the number is small, they are drawn into a life of criminal activity that feeds insecurity and danger in our cities.

Minimum wage: We discussed this during the last hour. To the extent that people are paid by some of the largest corporations in the world a wage that keeps them a good chunk below the poverty line, we feed desperation, we feed pain, we feed hunger, we feed want, and thus we feed insecurity on our streets. If we are going to actually have public safety awareness month, then we have to talk about what creates that lack of safety. Pov-

erty is an issue that has to be addressed, and to the extent that this government doesn't address it, I look forward to using May as a month in which I can raise these issues and point out the lack of action on the part of the government to actually deal with the root causes.

When we think about crime, we have to recognize that it isn't just one source, that there are a variety of sources that contribute to dangerous or destructive behaviour. Child abuse: When children are abused, it can create an anger in that child that comes out in anger at others—the words “inappropriate behaviour” understate it—and can result in people being explosively angry in a way that is very dangerous for society. Swiss psychoanalyst Alice Miller wrote a series of books in the 1980s and 1990s about the impact of child abuse on criminal behaviour and the link between the two. We should never forget that when we don't protect our children, when we don't have the right kinds of services in place, when we don't create a culture in this society of being child-protective, we sow the seeds for future dangerous activity. We sow the seeds for people to be self-destructive. We sow the seeds, in some instances, for drug addiction, because when people are self-destructive, when they carry that burden of anger and pain through their lives—what's the term they use?—they self-medicate. It doesn't matter whether it is legal or illegal; they self-medicate. We—and I have to repeat this—still should be astounded at the strength of the human spirit, because so many are poor, so many are abused, and so few actually engage in criminal behaviour. But if we really want our streets to be safe, Neighbourhood Watch is not enough. We have to go to the roots.

It's interesting to me, because I'm dealing right now with problems in my riding with the fallout from drug addiction. A number of people in the south end of my riding, for whatever circumstances, and I don't know everyone's story, are drug-addicted, and those people engage in behaviours like prostitution, breaking and entering, robbery, theft. Frankly, there are some who stand up and say, “We can't get at what caused this problem in the first place, but we can help those who are drug-addicted now,” those who have spoken out for methadone therapy. I know it's extraordinarily controversial, but it was interesting to me, in the course of reading about methadone and drug addiction, to look at a publication by the government of the United Kingdom put out in the last few years. They looked at the impact of methadone therapy on drug addicts and their criminal behaviour: Breaking and entering, street theft, robbery—dramatic reductions in those kinds of criminal behaviour when people who were addicted took a drug that dramatically reduced their addiction, reduced their need to get that particular drug. It reduces the amount of income they have to bring in and reduces the amount of criminal activity. So I think if we have safety awareness month, we have to honour all those who fought against drug addiction, who fought for reasonable therapies and support for people who are drug-addicted, who fought to provide the methods and the substances to get them off addiction and back onto the straight and narrow.

In my riding, the Oasis centre was set up about 15 years ago by a businessman who had become an alcoholic. He had lost everything. He rebuilt his life to the extent that he opened a storefront, and drug addicts and alcoholics came there to straighten out their lives. I have to say that in terms of road safety, people on the road who are not drunk, in terms of people who are no longer dependent on drugs to get through the day and thus don't have to engage in any kind of crime, those who fight against addiction deserve a tremendous amount of respect and recognition. So Mr. Kular is right: We need to recognize those in our community, in our neighbourhood, who have put forward Neighbourhood Watch, but we need to recognize those who actually go out and stop people from engaging in behaviour that feeds later criminal activity.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to be sharing my time with my colleague, so I'll wrap up there. But I want to say that May has to become a roots of crime awareness month, and I know that that's a theme we will be weaving into this when this bill is adopted.

1120

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): It's certainly a pleasure for me to stand in the House today to support my colleague from Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale. I know that he has been an advocate in this Legislature and in his community for safe streets, for the safety of his community, and in bringing this bill forward, a bill that recognizes that we do have problems. He stood here today and indicated that in his community, in my community, in all our communities we do have problems. But we also have to work with those who help to bring an understanding that something has to be done. I look at this bill as being an education bill, an awareness bill and a bill that's supported by so many organizations in our communities.

As I was sitting here just a few moments ago, I saw students walking into the gallery up here and I heard a little movement behind me. It brought me back to the time when I was teaching, in the 1970s, at a school in Cornwall, where a lady by the name of Mrs. Dobbyn came into the school. She was quite concerned about safety on the streets. She had three daughters, Carolyn, Jennifer and Linda; I taught all three. She told the school community at a meeting one night about the problems that that part of Riverdale was having with regard to bullying on the streets, and this thought that there might be people doing things to children and young people. She wanted a safe haven for these people. She investigated the Block Parent program, brought that idea forward and, along with the community police from the city, she set up and established the first Block Parent program in the community, in the city of Cornwall. That program has multiplied throughout my riding.

I certainly know that when I moved schools—I moved to Long Sault Public School and taught there for 20 years. Once again, when I got into that community I saw another group of parents who were interested, who had seen the positive effects of that program in the city of Cornwall. They decided that they wanted to put together

a Block Parent program in that school community, not only for the school community but for young people in general to know that when that sign is in the window of a house, it's a safe haven; there's a safety network there for them to go to. So I watched that develop.

This is what I see as being part of this bill. The member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale indicated the objectives, three of them recognizing the dangers on our streets, and he commented about those: to foster a change in the attitudes and behaviours surrounding street safety and to prevent further tragedies from happening. But he went further, recognizing the existing safety programs that we have out there. I look at the Block Parent communities that he commented on, and he commented about Neighbourhood Watch. I spent 14 years in municipal government and I watched as our smaller communities—I come from a large rural riding—were feeling greater occurrences of theft and whatnot. The OPP, which was always at our meetings, indicated too—and I look at one neighbourhood, the neighbourhood of Bonville. I think it was Rosedale Terrace too, if memory serves me right; it was a little while ago that I was reeve of the old Cornwall township, which no longer exists. I remember the community coming, and the suggestion was: Why not establish a neighbourhood watch? It's a great program where people watch out for one another, and this is what this bill is going to do. It's going to promote and it's going to recognize the volunteers. It's the volunteers who really are the backbone of these programs. It's going to recognize them and give them the opportunity of knowing that throughout Ontario we've set aside a month to understand the problems and to recognize the good work that they do. I do want to say, and I'm glad to have had the opportunity to add a few remarks, congratulations to the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale for his advocacy in wanting safe streets in our communities.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to be able to make a few comments today about Bill 145, An Act to proclaim the month of May as Street Safety Awareness Month.

I guess there are a couple of things I want to say about the title of the bill and about the bill in general. First of all, street safety comes in many, many forms. Whether or not there are drug dealers on the street, people with guns and gangs out there on the streets—that's one aspect of it. The other part of Street Safety Awareness Month, of course, is the people who break the law while they're driving their vehicles, like street racing, people who drive aggressively, drive under the influence of alcohol. All these types of things are part of Street Safety Awareness Month as well, as far as I'm concerned.

I think it's so important a topic, the fact that we would talk about an awareness month, that I think, really, we have to look at this particular area. I think every day of the year should be Street Safety Awareness Day. I don't know whether we can actually identify one particular month, whether it works out well or not—I'm not sure—but I can tell you that we do want our streets safe in

Ontario. Throughout Canada, we want our streets safe every day of the year. We want our communities to feel safe, we want our people to feel comfortable, whether they're shopping, going out in the evening, taking their family for a walk. Whatever it may be, we want to make sure that the citizens of the province of Ontario feel safe every day.

That's one reason why our leader, last year on December 11, 2005, released his Time for Action report. You can remember the summer of 2005 and the terrible tragedies we had with the number of young people in our communities who lost their lives due to guns-and-gangs violence and the use of illegal handguns. I can tell you that that report has gone over very well. We've encouraged the government to try to adopt a number—I believe there were 22 recommendations in that report.

I know that shortly after that terrible disaster on Yonge Street last year, when that young lady lost her life in that shooting on Boxing Day, in early January, the Premier identified that he would proceed with trying to put all the 1,000 new police officers in place by the end of this current year. That was the number one recommendation that John Tory had made in his report: to ensure that all of those police officers were actually put on the street by the end of this current year. Hopefully, that will happen. We're keeping a close eye on that, but, as you know, Caledonia is overtaking the policing stories in Ontario. At the same time, we will closely monitor that to make sure that there are actions in place that will not allow something like that to ever happen again.

I know that across the province, as well, on a lot of our streets we have our community safety zones. I know that even in rural Ontario we have safety zones for basically dealing with aggressive driving. I'm not so sure that something like that can't even apply to people who are charged with criminal activity in safety zones across the province. For example, if someone was caught in possession of a handgun in a particular area, the zone may be—I'm just making a suggestion, but the fact of the matter is that you may have a higher fine or a higher penalty, even if they were caught in a normal zone.

1130

As we proceed through this bill and proceed through the legal system, when we actually charge and penalize people for the activities in breaking laws on our streets and roads in communities, we have to look at one thing: Is the court system working for them? I can tell you that in my area of the province we have the worst court backlogs, some people say, that we've seen in the last 40 years. Right off the bat, if we're going to apply to have a Street Safety Awareness Month, we certainly have to make sure that when people are charged with criminal activities in these areas, they're not stuck in a rotating court system, the sort of catch-and-release court system we've seen in Ontario over the last two or three years. We absolutely have to have the proper justices of the peace and court officers in place to handle the backlog that's happening. I believe it's happening not only in the area I represent in the province but in other areas as well.

I don't have a lot of other comments to make on this, other than to say that obviously anyone would want to support a Street Safety Awareness Month, but we have to look at it in a broad spectrum and say, "How far does this go?" We want to make sure that in whatever we do in the province of Ontario, the actions by our justice ministries reflect the fact that we want our streets safe every day of the year and for the general public to be aware of those actions every day of the year.

With that, we will be supporting the bill, but we want to make sure that if it does get to committee, all these issues I brought up, like the court backlogs and the community safety zones, those sorts of things, are all brought out as areas that we could consider to be very important to the effectiveness of this bill.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale-High Park): Of course, I too will be supporting the bill. I hope my honourable colleague returns the favour and supports my bill at the turn of the hour.

Just to pick up where my colleague Mr. Tabuns left off, talking about some of the root causes of the crime we find on our streets, I want to talk about my own riding of Parkdale-High Park. We have people here from Parkdale-High Park. Welcome. It's an amazing place to live. It's also a place not without problems. One of the problems we see in Parkdale-High Park, whose root cause again is poverty, is drug addiction. I want to talk about the response to drug addiction that I've heard in this House. Drug addiction is not a crime; it is a health problem, and if we were to deal with it as a health problem we wouldn't have drug addiction. That's first and foremost.

Where have our detox centres gone? In our riding, most of them have been closed by cutbacks to our health care system. I know that our police, who do a wonderful job, are not social workers, don't want to be social workers, but are put in the place of social workers, because they have to arrest people, they put them in prison, they get out, they're back on the streets again. Why? Because they're addicted. So we need programs. We need rehab beds. We certainly need detox centres. Right now, in my riding there's not one detox bed for a woman who has an addiction problem. That's the root cause of a lot of the crime that happens in Parkdale-High Park. How do addicts support their habit? They do break-and-enters, they do petty crime of all sorts. The sex trade is an offshoot of this as well. Again, this is a health issue. We need to take it away from our law-and-order folk and give it to where it belongs, and that's to our hospitals, to our rehab centres, and fund them so that they can deal with it. That's number one.

The other thing I would like to mention is child poverty. As Mr. Tabuns mentioned, this is the root of all crime, ultimately. I have seen children playing in the corridors of buildings in south Parkdale, playing on the streets and in the driveways. Why? Because there is no place else to play. There is no green space that they can access easily and safely. Their parents are working two jobs just to make ends meet, so the supervision is lax as well because they don't have child care.

So how do we combat crime in the future? We provide child care spaces. How do we combat crime in the future? We provide a living minimum wage. That's why, in part, I brought my minimum wage bill in. We also provide housing. We have 122,000 households waiting for affordable housing right now. We have 67,000 waiting for affordable housing in Toronto. This leads to overcrowding, to unsafe conditions, unsafe houses, slum landlords and the like. We need to address the housing issue immediately if we want to address the crime issue too.

In the minute remaining I want to say, kudos to all of those incredible people who do make our communities safer; kudos to our social workers who work long, hard days, many of them for slightly more than minimum wage because of underfunding; kudos to our health care workers, many of whom are supplemented by volunteer workers because their institutions don't have the money to pay for salaries; kudos to our pastoral care workers. Many in my past profession of ministry work long hours, and they work them because they have to, providing the missing social work in their neighbourhoods. Kudos also to our legal aid workers; these are all hard-working folk in our community, many of them supplemented by volunteers because the funding is just not there. Kudos of course also go to our police. By the way, this 1,000 new police in the community just brings our policing up to where it was about 15 years ago. We still have fewer police in community policing roles in our neighbourhoods than we did a long time ago because of the increase in population, so they represent actually less of a percentage to population than they did when I grew up in this city. Kudos to our firefighters as well, because I know they're the ones usually first on the scene. Ms. Horwath has a wonderful bill that's going to aid them in their work.

Kudos to all of these people and kudos to safety awareness and Street Safety Awareness Month, absolutely. Do we want our communities safer? Of course we do. How do we go about it? That's where we differ, and that's a crucial difference. Let's get rid of the root causes of crime; let's not just apply a band-aid.

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): "Street safety is a fundamental right of all citizens," said Devon Fermoye, president of the National Capital Area Crime Stoppers, when contacted about this bill and his thinking.

He's absolutely correct, of course. Social violence and its ripple effects on our collective psyche take an enormous toll in modern society. The trauma caused by the threat to a person's safety cannot be underestimated. Victims of crime and negligence pay a terrible price, but so do all of us, as senseless suffering is magnified through TV news and other mass media, creating either a paralysis of fear and despair or a reaction of anger, often leading to more violence. In many ways, these once-removed reactions in observers of preventable violence can never be fully known but clearly are negative and costly.

This bill to heighten awareness of street safety will, it is hoped, not only reduce the number of accidents and

needless crimes and, therefore, those disturbing images and stories in the news, but will also arm our wider population with the tools they need to feel safe and secure where they live and work. I believe the partner agencies in my city of Ottawa will respond enthusiastically to this bill.

In Hintonburg, an area of which I've spoken previously in this chamber, a war between the lawful and the lawless has brought the community to the point of marching in the streets to fight back the effects of drugs and prostitution, slum landlords and biker gangs. Hintonburg is a classic example of a crisis situation bringing out the best or the worst in people, and consequently, the community association is arguably one of the most active in the whole city of Ottawa. Not wishing to make a virtue out of the mother of invention, necessity does have a way of getting us focused. Street safety is a daily issue in Hintonburg, and the community associations there welcome such a bill.

I'm glad to announce that September 21 was the official launching of the University of Ottawa Institute for Crime Prevention. I would also like to recognize other organizations in the Ottawa area that deal with crime prevention: Crime Prevention Ottawa; Ottawa Block Parents; Neighbourhood Watch; Mothers Against Drunk Driving, Ottawa chapter; Citizens for Safe Cycling; the Elizabeth Fry Society; the United Way; the YW/YMCA; the Boys and Girls Clubs of Ottawa and the National Capital Area Crime Stoppers, among many.

From another perspective—pedestrian/traffic safety—Professor Barry Wellar at the University of Ottawa evaluates the pedestrian-friendly quotient of our intersections from a walking safety perspective. His work has helped raise awareness not only with pedestrians themselves but city of Ottawa transportation officials as well about which intersections are most dangerous to cross. We need to be aware and walk defensively, according to Dr. Wellar. This bill, of course, would promote defensive walking and more pedestrian-friendly intersections.

1140

Although overall traffic offences have decreased in the last couple of years in the Ottawa area, there's been a considerable rise in traffic offences relating to the dangerous operation of motor vehicles in parts of the city. This is a reminder that no road is free from conflict; hence, this is the purpose of this particular bill, to remind people of that.

In 2005, the province announced funding of over \$250,000 to the Council on Aging of Ottawa and, as a result of that, the support for investigative teams and grant programs to examine the hate crimes/extremism investigation team related to racism in the streets etc., which has been very active.

Traffic-calming measures: In addition, speeding often results in fatalities, injuries, traffic collisions and property damage. There is a whole variety of mitigating circumstances such as speed bumps, which slow down, in intensive neighbourhoods, vehicles that would otherwise be going too quickly.

There is the whole question of issues relating to security: adequate lighting in our streets, keeping lamps working, installing more street lamps in laneways, alleys and dark places, and closed-circuit television etc.

Finally, I'd like to point out that neighbourhoods themselves have a role to play in strengthening the fabric by having street parties, community picnics, community garage sales, Canada Day events, community tournaments, pancake breakfasts etc.

In conclusion, this bill helps educate people on how they can reclaim their communities by working in conjunction with existing community groups and organizations and promoting old and new programs year-round.

In closing, I commend my colleague the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale and his insight in presenting this important initiative, which I will be supporting.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm pleased to rise to address this proposed bill by my colleague. Of course, we don't anticipate that anyone in this place would not support this proposal. I want to, however, address some specific areas that I believe we should all be concerned about when it comes to the issue of street safety.

First and foremost, I believe we should have in mind the safety of our children throughout our communities. There's nothing more devastating to a parent or to a community than to hear, for example, that a child is missing. As the bill proposes that this House and our communities across the province would recognize those organizations in the province who take on the responsibility of street safety, I want to take this opportunity to highlight the work of Child Find Ontario, with which I trust all members are familiar.

Child Find is an organization that assists in the search for missing children when the alert goes out. It is dedicated to delivering education and awareness programs around the issue of children's safety. It also sponsors fingerprinting sessions throughout the province. These are clinics that are organized. We have all seen them, perhaps in malls and at various events across the province. What takes place at these clinics is that children are actually fingerprinted on the spot. The kids then receive these kits that parents take home in the event that a child should go missing, so that immediately there is that evidence of the fingerprints available to police so that they can do their work. I want to commend the work of Child Find and celebrate the good work that they do and encourage people within our communities to support that work and to take advantage of that opportunity.

While we're speaking about street safety, the next issue that comes to my mind is the issue of street racing. While I commend the honourable member for bringing this forward, and rightfully so, I want to ask the member and all members of the government why, when I brought forward a private member's bill that would deal with this issue of street racing, members of the government chose not to provide their unanimous consent to ensure that that bill was passed into legislation before our summer break when we had an opportunity to do that.

I speak to this because Rob and Lisa Manchester, who are my constituents, came to their death through street racing. This was a young couple who have a young child now orphaned as a result of the criminal act of street racing. My bill that I proposed to this House was designed to empower police officers to do on-the-spot licence suspensions for anyone who, in the mind of the police officer, is even potentially involved in street racing, to ensure that the message is given to everyone in this province that street racing is not going to be tolerated in Ontario. For a Liberal government that through Bill 52 is prepared to strip a driver's licence from a young person because they're truant or because they drop out of school but whose members were not prepared to give unanimous consent to pass a piece of legislation that would strip the driver's licence of someone who is potentially a criminal for having caused a death or serious injury as a result of street racing, I find it unbelievable.

This is where I believe people become cynical about politics as a whole. They hear the rhetoric, through debates such as we're having this morning, about how we want to address the issue of safety and street safety, but when it comes to actually doing something, when it comes to actually implementing legislation that has some teeth, that has some benefit, that can actually make a difference, we begin to play the partisan game and we say no. So I call on members of this House, on members of the Liberal backbench and of cabinet and on the minister, that, as we will support this bill this morning—and I will—I would ask that they also give consideration to revisiting the street racing bill to ensure that we do what we can do as legislators to save lives.

Also, in that context, I want to bring to the attention of the Legislature a program called Road Watch. I would encourage the public to go to the Road Watch website. I think very few people are actually aware that this program exists. It allows individual citizens within our communities to complete a citizen's report on anyone they observe driving erratically or dangerously. That report is then sent in or faxed in to the local police station. Individuals are then researched by the police station, and they will receive an information letter from the police advising them that they have been reported. If there is more than one such report on any given driver, they will actually receive a visit from a police officer at their front door to caution them that they have been observed driving dangerously. This is the kind of initiative that we can take within our communities to exercise responsibility as citizens. Again, I want to encourage and thank those individuals, because this is largely done on a volunteer basis by citizens within our communities, for this initiative.

In closing my remarks, I say to you one more time, can we not call on this government to go beyond the rhetoric of simply saying we're going to recognize a month of the year as street safety month, do something substantive and pass the street racing bill that will once and for all empower our police officers across this province to deal with this deadly issue that has claimed

so many innocent lives? Today, Allison Hickey and Mark Radman are still suffering the effects of the accident in which they were involved as a result of street racing. Lives are changed forever because of this act. Let's take the opportunity as a Legislature to do something about it.

1150

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): Congratulations to Dr. Kular to proclaim May Street Safety Awareness Month. The program will have a positive impact on safety in our streets. He has included some of them. In fact, he has indicated that there are a number of programs such as the Block Parent program, the Neighbourhood Watch program, the Toronto anti-violence intervention strategy, the Take Back the Night program and the Mothers Against Drunk Driving program. So there are a number of these programs which are very effective.

But these programs are not enough to ensure that street crime is being mitigated. We need to look at the programs of prevention, the programs that will deal with the causes of crime, as was indicated earlier.

One of the main causes of crime in my riding has to do with drug addiction and prostitution. In some cases, our police will arrest a drug addict 20 times over, and he or she will be back on the street very quickly. I have written to Police Chief Blair to check out the Vancouver model. In Vancouver, when a drug addict is arrested, a social worker is automatically assigned to that drug addict to take him to a hospital or to a rehabilitation program or even to a one-to-one talk to see how that criminal or how that addict can be helped. That, I think, is a great model, and we should look at it. The police chief has written back to me. He says that it's under study; it's under examination. I just hope that we'll take that step in the right direction to ensure that this program will be implemented right here in Toronto.

The prevention program that is really very much important and very much effective is that program which starts at home and that program which starts in the schools. The largest indicator of a child's future success is his or her sense of self-worth. When a child feels that he or she is able to move within their environment and structure it and has a sense that they can actually access it, has a sense that, "Yes, I'm important in my school; I'm important in my home; I'm important in my environment"—when he or she gets that sense, then you're beginning to create a good citizen with a sense of civic duties.

The McGuinty government has recently instituted—and this is where we have to give the Premier a great deal of credit. We're talking about a program in our schools that has to do with character development. What could be better than to start in the schools—start at home, but start in the schools with character development: a program where a child is being indicated, where a child is being shown, how best to help each other, how best to have a program in school where they can move around with each other, where they can be amongst their peers and help out?

In my riding of Davenport—which, of course, started actually in Parkdale—I had written to each school prin-

icipal and I said to the principal, "Mr. or Madam Principal, you give me the best two students in your school whom we can show off to the community. Give me the best two students—the students who have a sense of civic duty, the students who will help each other in terms of kindness, respect for other people's feelings, being helpful towards younger children and the elderly, and conducting themselves in a responsible fashion towards their teachers, their parents and their peers." This program that we had produced there was well-received because we had shown those two children of each school to the community. We said to the other children, "Look at these two kids here on our platform. These kids whom we present to you, the community and to the other children are the ones that we think you should emulate. You should emulate their characteristics. Be kind to each other, help each other, be good to the teachers and listen to your parents." These are the kind of character tools that can be useful when we want to include that program in terms of mitigating crime in our streets.

I want to thank the member for indicating how we can be effective in ensuring that we have safety in our streets.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Kular, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Kular: I just want to mention that with all Ontario's organizations and projects dedicated to educating the public on street awareness, I believe it is time to recognize their contributions and efforts to our community. The month of May, which holds Police Week, is ideal for recognizing the efforts by all these various community programs and initiatives in fostering safe streets within our great province of Ontario. I want to thank all these organizations for their hard work and dedication to be a part of helping our residents live in a safer community. A safer community is a strong community.

Before I close my remarks, I want to thank all the members of this Legislature who made their speech and for their input in recognizing those organizations. I want to thank them.

The Deputy Speaker: The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT (RAISING THE MINIMUM WAGE), 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI (AUGMENTATION DU SALAIRE MINIMUM)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We will first deal with ballot item number 57, standing in the name of Ms. DiNovo.

Ms. DiNovo has moved second reading of Bill 150. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. It's carried.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): I ask that this be sent to the committee on estimates.

The Deputy Speaker: Ms. DiNovo has requested that this be sent to the standing committee on estimates. Agreed? Agreed.

STREET SAFETY AWARENESS MONTH ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR LE MOIS DE LA SENSIBILISATION À LA SÉCURITÉ DANS LES RUES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We shall now deal with ballot item number 58, standing in the name of Mr. Kular.

Mr. Kular has moved second reading of Bill 145. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale): I request a recorded vote.

The Deputy Speaker: I didn't see five members standing. It's carried.

Pursuant to standing order 96, this bill is referred to the committee of the whole House.

Mr. Kular: I would like to refer this bill to the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Kular has asked that the bill be referred to the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly. Agreed? Agreed.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been dealt with, I do now leave the chair. The House will resume at 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1159 to 1330.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I have a message from His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, signed by his own hand.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The Lieutenant Governor transmits supplementary estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending March 31, 2007, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

BROWNFIELD SITES

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I rise today on behalf of John Tory and the PC caucus and would like to welcome members from the Cement Association of Canada. I was pleased to take part in a very informative luncheon session, where we were treated to some fascinating presentations. One of the main themes was brownfield redevelopment and the fact that the intent and integration for revitalization in Ontario is here, but

this needs to be supported by policy—directly from the Cement Association of Canada.

Which leads me to once again correct the record of Liberal inaccuracies and their relentless effort of saying anything to get elected. The McGuinty Liberals continue to take credit for things they haven't done and to blame others for things they have done. The member from Brant, during a lob-ball question to his minister, clearly refused to be straight about who should be getting credit for beginning the work on brownfield redevelopment.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, seemingly very willing to play ball, went along with this and suggested that they are the first government to take action on this work. What he failed to tell hard-working Ontarians is that he and his government are taking credit for the work done by others. To be accurate, the Brownfields Statute Law was passed in 2001, with direction to ministry experts to start work on regulations.

It's a shame that this government can't be straight about such an important economic and environmental policy as brownfield redevelopment and runs roughshod over the truth. The member from Brant has mentioned to come to his riding for a cup of coffee and discuss brownfields. That offer sounds interesting for no other reason than to see if it's possible for a McGuinty Liberal to get to the bottom of a cup of coffee without breaking a promise.

ANGELINA PAVAO

Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale): I'm pleased to rise today to acknowledge the achievement of an exemplary citizen in my riding of Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale. Angelina Pavao, 20 years old, recently placed in the top 10 for the Miss Brampton title and was awarded Contestant of the Year by the Canadian Scholarship Pageant. During her running, she tirelessly promoted her platform: STRD—Stop Teen Reckless Driving.

Although she did not win the Miss Brampton title, she still continues to promote her cause in Brampton today. She has been acknowledged in the National Book of Canada. Angelina knows far too many people who have been injured—and sadly, have even died—as a result of reckless drivers on the road. For Angelina, this cause is clearly a personal one and really hits home. This is one of the main reasons she continues to reach out to the community to speak about the responsibilities of driving.

I believe it's individuals like Angelina who make a difference in the community by standing up and speaking about stopping reckless driving. She is a positive influence on other youth. It's my pleasure to stand here today and congratulate Ms. Angelina Pavao on her achievements and for being such an outstanding citizen of the city of Brampton.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: On Tuesday, October 31, in responding to

the Minister of Economic Development and Trade's statement on Kellogg's new plant, I mistakenly cited an incorrect fact. To correct the record, the company Maunco Sanitation is thriving and doing well and not in fact slated to close, as I was led to believe prior to making the statement. I have since double-checked my sources and confirmed that they are not closing. I am very pleased to correct my record.

VETERANS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Each year in the riding of Simcoe North, communities host several Remembrance Day events, such as banquets, parades, school visits and memorial services, leading up to the celebration of remembrance on November 11.

For the second year in a row, I am pleased to have veterans from my riding visit Queen's Park on the day that we as provincial politicians pay tribute to those men and women who put their lives on the line to protect the freedoms that we enjoy as Canadians. Today we have in the Speaker's gallery Mr. Bob Hamelin, Mr. Bert Reynolds and Mr. Marcel Duval from Penetanguishene Branch 68, Royal Canadian Legion; and Mr. Frank Graham, Mr. Bernie Hamelin and Mr. John Calhoun from Midland Branch 80, Royal Canadian Legion. Accompanying the veterans is my colleague the town of Midland deputy mayor, Jim Downer, nephew of former MPP Wally Downer. Ladies and gentlemen, I would appreciate it if you would give them a warm welcome.

There are a number of stories we could tell about these gentlemen. They have volumes of information concerning the great wars. But I did want to repeat one comment that Mr. Bob Hamelin from Penetanguishene had mentioned to me. He said that on two separate occasions during World War II, he had the opportunity of meeting Dwight D. Eisenhower on the battlefield, and in fact one time served Dwight D. Eisenhower rabbit that they were cooking out in the trenches. So I just want to say that is one story. It's a great opportunity to pay tribute today to these very special people.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): In August, the Ministry of Finance sent letters to property owners in unorganized areas telling them the McGuinty Liberals would be reforming the provincial land tax. The many constituents who called my office after receiving this letter were not fooled by the word "reform." They believe this means the McGuinty Liberals will increase their provincial land tax, even though many of these same property owners don't receive any services from the provincial government at all.

The letter claimed that any new revenues that may result from the changes would be used to support services in the north. Again, my constituents were not fooled. Many of them have camps with no electricity or with electricity they paid to put in themselves. They have a

road which they also paid to put in and maintain themselves. They don't have street lights or garbage pickup. They want to know why they will be hit with a tax increase when they aren't getting and won't be getting access to provincial services.

The letter also said the Ministry of Finance would be holding public hearings in the near future to inform these property owners about proposed changes to the provincial land tax. The ministry has now brought in the proposed changes through Bill 151. My constituents wonder, what happened to the public hearings that were promised "in the near future," and why are the McGuinty Liberals moving forward without ever having heard from the property owners who will be directly affected?

These concerns are real and my constituents are correct. They should expect a big tax increase with no increase in services, and they are right to wonder how fair that is.

ST. MARY'S HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETES

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): I rise in the House today to congratulate the wonderful athletes from St. Mary's High School in Hamilton West.

On Tuesday, I received an email from dedicated coaches John Ivinac and Sean Kiely asking if we could celebrate and acknowledge these wonderful athletes. Their hard work and dedication won them the provincial championships in 2000 and 2006. They received the provincial bronze medal in 2003 and 2004, were the Spectator Cup champions three of the last four years, and in 2006 became the city champions and moved on to play in the OFSAA championship. Playing seven games over two and a half days was physically draining for all the teams, but the St. Mary's senior girls' soccer team persevered and were crowned the Ontario high school AAA champions and captured the gold.

I would like to celebrate, please, Devyn Cuncic, Daniella Berlingieri, Rebecca Rewi, Jenna Bihun, Michelle Spadafora, Meaghan Nederveen, Vanessa and Jessica Bonomo, Carla Randazzo, Dana Bentzen-Bilvst, Megan Coskey, Hayley Marler, Micayla Drysdale, Emily Clarke, Kelly Williams, Jenny Vaughan, Brittany Paglia, Caitlin Bettiol, Daniella Genovese and all of the wonderful athletes from St. Mary's.

I commend these students, their teachers and coaches, and all of the athletes across Ontario whose practice, commitment and hard work fulfill a dream that all young people achieve. We celebrate St. Mary's.

1340

TORONTO EXPO 2015

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): In spite of the best efforts of the city of Toronto and the proponents of Toronto Expo 2015, I've been told the bid is dead, and the McGuinty Liberal government has to assume responsibility for pulling the trigger.

More than a week ago, I stood in this House as the PC critic for the Minister of Tourism and called upon the provincial government to work co-operatively with the city of Toronto and the federal government to recognize the potential economic benefits which would have been realized across the province, to set aside their partisan differences, prioritize this challenge, share the responsibility and work together to send the strongest possible bid for Toronto Expo 2015. But no, this was too much to ask of this McGuinty Liberal government, for they're in election mode. They are taking the advice of an American political sleaze merchant, James Carville, who is telling them to attack, attack, attack. They have brought federal-provincial relations to a new low, such that co-operation becomes next to impossible.

This provincial government will say anything to get elected, including contradicting the truth. They are entirely abdicating provincial leadership by blaming the federal government for all of their shortcomings, and today's disappointing news about the Expo bid is yet another example.

John Tory said today, "Ontario needs a strong Canada and Canada needs a strong Ontario." I couldn't agree more. But if they keep this up and continue to poison the relationship with the federal government, we're in for a long year of partisan bickering leading up to the election where little benefiting the people of Ontario will get done.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: In the statement just made, the member made some inferences to the truth that are inappropriate in this House. I'd like to see if it can be withdrawn.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I didn't hear anything that was out of order, but if the member chooses to withdraw, you may.

KNIGHT'S TABLE

Mr. Vic Dhillon (Brampton West-Mississauga): The Knight's Table, a charitable restaurant in my local community of Brampton, needs our help to keep serving meals to those less fortunate. It isn't a lack of food that could close the Knight's Table; it's funds for utilities, rent and supplies.

The people of Brampton have been very generous in giving food and their time, but what the Knight's Table needs now is your lunch money. Consider sharing your lunch money, no matter how little, to feed Brampton's hungry. The Knight's Table serves mostly the working poor, people who are having trouble making ends meet. They serve breakfast, lunch and dinner to roughly 100 Bramptonians and operate a food bank that serves over 500, 200 of whom are children, which should be very bothersome to us all.

In the past, I've been proud to help the Knight's Table find a new home and provide computers and equipment for their employment program. I've seen first-hand the vital service and the difference the Knight's Table makes in people's lives.

Despite their hardship and with your support, they're hopeful that things will change for the better. I have committed a modest personal donation. I hope you will give what you can, too. Donations can be sent to the Knight's Table, 116 Kennedy Road South, Unit 6, Brampton, L6W 3E7, or online at knightstable.org.

HOLOCAUST EDUCATION WEEK

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): Last night marked the beginning of Holocaust Education Week, the world's most comprehensive annual Holocaust education program. Sponsored by the UJA Federation's Holocaust Centre of Toronto, Holocaust Education Week, which runs from November 1 to November 9, is celebrating its 26th anniversary with more than 100 programs in many venues across the GTA.

We are fortunate to be hosting several of those programs in my riding of Thornhill. These include a candle-lighting ceremony and remembrance of Jewish war veterans at Shaar Shalom Synagogue, presentations by Holocaust survivors and educators at Netivot HaTorah and Leo Baeck day schools, and the screening of the award-winning documentary *March of the Living* at the Chabad Lubavitch Markham campus.

The Holocaust was a terrible tragedy, a horrific event in which over six million Jewish men, women and children lost their lives. In honour of those who were lost, it is our duty to create more public awareness in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of the past and recognize our responsibility for the future.

In that spirit, I'm pleased to remind all members of this House that in September the honourable Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, with the support of the Canadian Jewish Congress and the Holocaust Memorial Centre of Toronto, announced funding for the Holocaust Memorial Award. This award encourages young people to express lessons learned from the Holocaust.

Holocaust Education Week is an excellent opportunity not only to increase awareness of the atrocities of genocide but to promote acceptance and tolerance of diversity within our communities and throughout Ontario. I would like to thank the UJA Federation of Greater Toronto for organizing this event. I encourage everyone to take the time to participate.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): Today marks 100 years since Alzheimer's disease was identified by medical scientists. Unfortunately, Alzheimer's disease and its victims continue to be a growing presence in our society. As Ontario's population ages, so do the number of people who succumb to this disease, which robs them and their families and our society of remembrance of things past. Statistics Canada estimates that approximately 420,000 Canadians are living with Alzheimer's. Of these, 155,000 live in Ontario. In less than 25 years, the number of Canadians is expected to jump to 750,000.

As a former president of the Alzheimer's Society of Canada and as an MPP representing a riding with the third-largest senior population in Canada, I'm very much aware of the impact this disease has on individuals, families and our communities. Organizations like the Alzheimer's Society of Canada are making great strides in the battle against this disease. Vaccines, new drugs, treatments and other diagnostic tools are on the horizon.

I encourage members of this House and all Ontarians to help us write the final chapter in the fight against this disease. Please contact your local Alzheimer's Society and see what you can do. Support them.

VISITORS

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Following up on the excellent note of my colleague from Willowdale, I wonder if all members might join with us in welcoming our guests from the Alzheimer's Society and thanking them for the dedication they show to our loved ones in Ontario.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Speaker, Niagara Centre page Annaliese Ionson wants you to say hello to her parents, Michael and Karen Ionson, here in the gallery, as well as her godmother, Donna D'Angelo, here from British Columbia.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I would like to welcome in the gallery, from Kapuskasing, Alderman Dave Plourde, who is here with his wife, Christine. Their daughter, Breanna, has had a wonderful six weeks as a page here in the Legislature. They will be bringing her back to the community of Kapuskasing tomorrow. Let us welcome them.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): It is appropriate to bring to members' attention that this is the last day for this particular group of pages. They have provided us with excellent, mature and first-rate service for the last number of weeks. Join me in expressing our appreciation.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: A friendly motion that we double their pay.

The Speaker: Introduction of bills is coming.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Yesterday, the member for Leeds-Grenville, Mr. Runciman, introduced Bill 157, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act with respect to salaries in lieu of retirement credits. Upon reviewing the bill, I have determined that it would cause an expenditure of public money out of the consolidated revenue fund, contrary to standing order 56. Accordingly, I have directed that the bill not be printed and that it be deleted from the Orders and Notices paper.

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INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PUBLIC SERVICE OF ONTARIO STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2006 LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT DES LOIS AYANT TRAIT À LA FONCTION PUBLIQUE DE L'ONTARIO

Mr. Phillips moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 158, An Act to revise legislation relating to the public service of Ontario by repealing the Public Service Act, enacting the Public Service of Ontario Act, 2006 and the Ontario Provincial Police Collective Bargaining Act, 2006 and making complementary amendments to various Acts and by amending various Acts in respect of the successor rights of certain public servants / *Projet de loi 158, Loi visant à réviser des lois ayant trait à la fonction publique de l'Ontario en abrogeant la Loi sur la fonction publique, en édictant la Loi de 2006 sur la fonction publique de l'Ontario et la Loi de 2006 sur la négociation collective relative à la Police provinciale de l'Ontario, en apportant des modifications complémentaires à diverses lois et en modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne la succession aux qualités pour certains fonctionnaires.*

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The minister may wish to make a brief statement.

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): I'll make a comment under ministerial statements.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move that the standing committee on justice policy be authorized to meet outside of its normal meeting times for the purpose of conducting public hearings on Bill 107, An Act to amend the Human Rights Code, and that the standing committee on regulations and private bills be authorized to meet outside its normal meeting times for the purpose of conducting public hearings on Bill 124, An Act to provide for fair registration practices in Ontario's regulated professions.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

CONSIDERATION OF BILL 28

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House

Leader): I move that the October 25, 2006, order of the House referring Bill 28, An Act to require the taking and analysing of blood samples to protect victims of crime, emergency service workers, good Samaritans and other persons and to make consequential amendments to the Health Care Consent Act, 1996 and the Health Protection and Promotion Act, to the standing committee on regulations and private bills be discharged and that the bill be referred instead to the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): I'm pleased that we've introduced our proposed Public Service of Ontario Statute Law Amendment Act today.

The bill is very important for the people who work in the public service in Ontario but of course, most importantly, for the people of Ontario. Ontario's current public service legislation has had only minor revisions over the past few decades and in fact has not been significantly changed since it was first created in 1878. We have consulted extensively on our proposed legislation. We've talked with our partners, our bargaining agents, our current and former ministry executives, government agencies and members of all parties here in the Legislature. I'm pleased to report that the feedback from these consultations has been very positive and very constructive. Many of the suggestions put forward by our bargaining agents and others have been incorporated and I believe have significantly improved the legislation I'm introducing today.

I would like to introduce some of our partners who are in the gallery today. I will ask them to stand after I have introduced them all. The president of the Ontario Provincial Police Association, Karl Walsh, is here. The president of our Association of Management, Administrative and Professional Crown Employees of Ontario, AMAPCEO, Gary Gannage, is here. Representing our Ontario Public Service Employees Union, OPSEU, representing Leah Casselman, is the chief negotiator, Terry Baxter. Representing the Association of Law Officers of the Crown is President Deanna Exner. I wonder if they might stand and be recognized.

I might just say that they are strong voices for their members, but my experience is that they share with all of us an overriding commitment to quality public service, and we're well served by them.

If you would also permit me, some of our public servants have worked long and hard on this, and if I

might acknowledge them: Catherine Brown, Elizabeth Goldberg, Ayumi Bailly and Don Fawcett have spent the last year pouring their heart into this, and I appreciate the work. They're sitting over there. Good to see you.

Mr. Speaker, as you and the members of this House know well, we are proud of the dedicated people who work for the Ontario public service. They do excellent work every day, providing top-quality services to the people of Ontario. Our government respects and values the dedication that public servants bring to their work. Ontario's public service is second to none. It's been recognized time and again, over decades, around the world for its professionalism and excellence.

The legislation before the House today recognizes the value and trust all Ontarians place on their public service and supports its true mission: to serve the public interest and to uphold public trust. Values like trust, fairness and excellence have always been part of the Ontario public service culture. This legislation will help ensure that the public service will continue to be accountable, ethical, non-partisan and professional. The legislation includes a new statement of purpose that will help to foster a greater common understanding of the role of this fundamental democratic institution. The legislation also provides the tools to ensure that we achieve that purpose. The legislation would help ensure the public service is effective in serving the public, the government and the Legislature. It would ensure that the public service of Ontario is accountable, ethical, non-partisan and professional. It provides a clear framework for the administration, leadership and management of the Ontario public service, and it clarifies the rights and duties of public servants concerning ethical conduct.

Our government supports the high standards of integrity in our public service. We recognize the need to ensure our public servants have the important safeguards and protections they need to do their jobs. That is why this legislation, if passed, will also imbed new whistleblowing protection for Ontario public servants—the first time, I must say, that they will receive this protection. It will also ensure clear conflict-of-interest rules with the same principles and expectations right across our public sector. It will restore successor rights for government and government agency employees. So if a government undertaking is transferred, the affected employees would continue to be covered by the collective agreement that is in place and represented by the same bargaining agent. These are the same protections that are afforded to our private sector employees.

By building on our commitment to provide real protection for public servants in Ontario, we will ensure that, should the need arise, the foundation is in place to allow allegations of wrongdoing to surface and to be addressed. The bill before you today would significantly strengthen provisions that were introduced more than 10 years ago but actually never proclaimed. It would provide public service employees with the very important ability, should the need arise, to disclose alleged serious wrongdoing without fear of reprisal.

1400

Our proposed whistle-blower protection would give authority to an independent officer of this Legislature, the Integrity Commissioner, to investigate and publicly report on serious allegations of wrongdoing. The proposed legislation would ensure that allegations of wrongdoing could be effectively brought forward and properly addressed.

The proposed new act also clarifies political activity rights and restrictions for all public servants and outlines clear accountability. The bill would bring greater clarity to the rules and to whom they apply so public servants can know clearly what they can and cannot do related to their political involvement inside and outside of work. In this way, we can be sure to balance the need to preserve a non-partisan, neutral public service with an individual's right to participate in political activity.

Ontario's public service has a strong culture of ethics. This proposed legislation reinforces this and ensures that ministers and deputy ministers are accountable for the conduct of their staff and for adherence to conflict-of-interest rules.

Another change in the legislation relates to the Ontario Provincial Police. The current Public Service Act contains the collective bargaining provisions for the Ontario Provincial Police. With this bill, we are proposing to move the collective bargaining provisions, essentially unchanged, into a new, stand-alone statute: the Ontario Provincial Police Collective Bargaining Act. This is consistent with collective bargaining provisions for other public service bargaining units that are in statutes other than the Public Service Act.

This proposed bill also takes the very important step of restoring successor rights to crown employees, which the previous government removed in 1995. Currently, virtually all unionized workers in the public and private sectors in Ontario have successor rights, except Ontario government employees. Under the new legislation, public sector employees again will have the same rights enjoyed by workers in the private sector. That means that under the proposed legislation, public servants whose jobs are moved to a municipal government in Ontario or a non-government organization will continue to keep their rights under their union contracts. It would also mean that a new employer would be required to uphold an existing contract or collective agreement.

I'm proud of the legislation we are introducing today. The legislation would enhance transparency and accountability in the public service and make it more efficient. It would update and clarify responsibilities in many areas so that the fundamental principles of public service—accountability, competency, non-partisanship and professionalism—are clearly and firmly identified. This is why we've taken an historic step today by introducing legislation that brings greater transparency and accountability to the public service while recognizing Ontario's long-standing tradition of public service excellence.

Our government is committed to ensuring the public continues to be well served by an accountable, ethical,

non-partisan and professional public service which is dedicated to making this province the best it can be.

CRIME PREVENTION WEEK

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I rise to inform the honourable members that next week, November 5 to 11, is Crime Prevention Week in Ontario. The McGuinty government is on the side of families concerned about crime and safety and we are committed to playing an active role in preventing crime and keeping neighbourhoods safe for Ontario families.

We know that fighting crime is important. That's why the McGuinty government is investing \$51 million in fighting guns and gangs and why this government is helping our police and municipal partners put 1,000 new officers on the streets of Ontario. But averting crime is just as important as fighting crime, and that's why I'm excited to tell this House that the McGuinty government will be providing \$792,000 in grant funding this year to help our community partners stop crime before it happens.

Ontario has been observing Crime Prevention Week since 1970. The McGuinty government has played a collaborative role with police services and community agencies in the fight against crime. Since 2003, we have invested more than \$3.4 million in direct community-based crime prevention programs across Ontario.

The theme for Crime Prevention Week this year is "Working Together to Build Safer Communities." The theme underlines our government's belief that crime prevention is everybody's business.

Today I'm announcing a call for applications for a program that will help community groups play a significant role in preventing crime. Through the Safer and Vital Communities grant, the McGuinty government will invest an additional \$792,000 to encourage people, police, businesses and government to work together to forge new alliances and develop community initiatives to prevent and reduce crime. The grants concentrate on priority areas for crime prevention, such as youth crime, hate crimes, seniors' and women's issues, and Internet luring.

Through the Safer and Vital Communities grants, the McGuinty government will provide up to \$20,000 per project to community not-for-profit organizations. In the past, this funding has supported programs that provide job opportunities for youth and develop strategies for counteracting youth gangs and violence. This funding has also supported programs that combat Internet luring and provide after-school mentoring and leadership programs for young people.

The deadline for applications to this program will be December 15, 2006. Early in the new year, the safer communities grant review committee will assess these applications and make recommendations to our government.

Crime prevention programs work. Let me mention a few existing programs that illustrate that fact.

The Leave Out Violence, or LOVE, initiative in Toronto involves young people in developing solutions to youth violence. The group developed a youth violence prevention manual.

Crime prevention grants also help the people of Matachewan First Nation respond to the unique needs of aboriginal children and youth.

Multicultural Youth in Action, a Windsor organization, develops employment training programs for multicultural young people and helps them hone their academic and social skills.

In Ottawa, the foundation for safer communities project trains local citizens to conduct safety audits and put in place community safety measures.

These programs prove their worth every day, giving not just youth but entire communities real opportunities, providing Ontarians with needed life skills, and keeping our citizens safe from physical, economic and emotional harm.

As I mentioned previously, next week is Crime Prevention Week, and police services throughout Ontario are organizing local events to promote crime prevention and community safety. I urge all members and people across the province to support Crime Prevention Week in their local areas. Working together, we can and will build safer communities in which all Ontarians can live, work and play.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Responses?

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm certainly pleased to respond to the minister's statement. I just want to recognize the minister and his staff, who provided me a briefing here this morning. I thank the minister for that. I also want to recognize Mr. Walsh, the president of the Ontario Provincial Police Association. We're proud to have them located in the city of Barrie. They do a lot of great work, and I'm pleased to see him here today.

One of the McGuinty Liberals' election promises to taxpayers was to make government business your business, and to date there's been no public consultation on the new Public Service Act, which is clearly another broken Liberal promise.

The whistle-blowing part of the bill is certainly welcomed. I look forward to seeing how that's actually going to operate. It's interesting that you have delegated the Integrity Commissioner to be responsible for this part of the bill, as it's going to cover the entire public service, and there's the Integrity Commissioner along with two staff. I have to say that whistle-blowing is a very serious area because it covers a number of important areas. Permitted grounds for disclosure of wrongdoing include a grave health, safety or environmental hazard, contravention of a law or regulation, gross mismanagement, or directing or counselling someone to commit any of the

above. It is obviously going to require significant resources and expertise for that to be handled, and in a timely manner, in terms of what we're dealing with.

1410

I would say to the minister and would ask him the question: Why did he choose the Integrity Commissioner as opposed to the Ombudsman, who currently has the expertise, the resources, to deal with what we're talking about in terms of issues that have to be dealt with in a timely manner? We're talking about grave health, safety and environmental hazards. You're going to have to have a very quick turnaround in terms of dealing with this. The way it's set up is that the complaint would go to the Integrity Commissioner and then it would be referred back to the deputy minister. It seems to me that this is something that the minister is going to have to look at a little bit more closely, because, quite frankly, I would have thought he would be looking at someone with the operation of the Ombudsman to deal with such an important area as whistle-blowing.

CRIME PREVENTION WEEK

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to rise today and make a few comments on Crime Prevention Week in response to the statement by the minister. I too would like to welcome Karl Walsh and Ron Middel from the OPP association. Mr. Tascona brags about having the OPPA in the city of Barrie but I have the OPP general headquarters in my riding of Simcoe North, and I'm very proud of that. I had the opportunity last night to have dinner with Commissioner Julian Fantino at the general headquarters awards night.

I looked through this—

Interjections.

Mr. Dunlop: You can be sarcastic and heckle all you want, but I'm looking through this statement and I see all the wonderful things they've done: the \$51 million for fighting guns and gangs, the \$3.4 million in direct community-based crime prevention programs—all kinds of dollar signs. Do you know what I didn't notice in there? It was the number one crisis in Ontario today facing the Ontario Provincial Police, and that's Caledonia. I wonder if they'll be celebrating Crime Prevention Week in Caledonia next week?

Just last week, I asked the minister what the total cost of policing was for the Caledonia crisis, and he had no idea. He was fluffing it off to other areas of the OPP, saying, "We can't pull those numbers together." But I don't think that's a responsible answer at all. The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services should know almost on a weekly basis the exact cost of policing so he can provide those numbers to the citizens of this province. It is their tax dollars they're spending.

This is not something that we turn and blame Ottawa for every second day. It's not something that we blame Mr. Prentice or Mr. Harper for. This is the government that tackled Caledonia in the manner it has, which has cost the Ontario Provincial Police budget literally tens of

millions of dollars and will have an impact at the end of this year.

I would like to hear more responses from the minister on exactly what the costs are at Caledonia. If he wants to brag about Crime Prevention Week and all the wonderful things they're doing, let's make a few statements on what's actually happening at Caledonia and the tens of millions of dollars it's costing the citizens of Ontario for this crisis that they themselves have generated.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I want to respond to the Minister of Community Safety. New Democrats join with him in acknowledging Crime Prevention Week and, indeed, I want to make it very clear that New Democrats think it's a crime that the government has not kept its promise to return the child benefit clawback. New Democrats think it's a crime that this government prohibits agricultural workers organizing and forming trade unions so they can collectively bargain around workplace health and safety. New Democrats think it's a crime that Wal-Mart workers are denied the right to card-based certification in their efforts to unionize. New Democrats think it's a crime that this government won't raise the minimum wage now to \$10 an hour. New Democrats think it's a crime that this government has turned its back on senior citizens and working families who are at risk of losing their homes because they can't afford to pay skyrocketing, out-of-control property taxes, never mind electricity rates that have gone through the ceiling and natural gas prices that continue to rise. New Democrats think it's a crime that this government has destroyed over 118,000 manufacturing jobs in the last two years and puts thousands more at risk in the remaining year of its mandate.

So I say to you, yes, New Democrats join with you in proclaiming Crime Prevention Week, and we say to this government that it should put its own house in order first.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I rise to comment on the bill related to public employees. I want to commend the minister for two things. First of all, his staff called yesterday and provided a briefing to me today for half an hour, which is a very rare occurrence. I want to say that this happens all too seldom in this House. Most often what happens when you arrive is that you, as the critic, are given a bill, which looks like this, and then asked to comment for five minutes on the contents of it, having had no opportunity whatsoever to even know what is in it. But I want to commend the minister and his staff for coming to my office today and giving me half an hour of their time to explain what they felt were the salient points.

I've had an opportunity to listen to the minister now and consider the salient points, and I must agree with the minister that we have one of the best public employee groups of civil servants in the entire country and, in fact, in the entire world. They do a tremendous job, day in and day out, for the people of Ontario, and it is they who are

on the front lines dealing with the public. It's often the politicians who take the credit for laws or how things are undertaken, but it is the public employees who are there to deliver it, and they do it so well.

I also want to talk about two aspects in the very limited time available. The first is the loosening of the political restrictions. I welcome that the political restrictions have been loosened just a tiny bit to now include managerial personnel. This was not the case prior to the introduction of this bill, and it is a good thing. I am mindful of the inclusion for the first time of ministers' staff, and the provisions of the bill, in my view, will go a long way to ending the misunderstandings and some of the allegations that have been made in this House on ministerial staff, particularly in the last few weeks of dealing with the federal Liberal leadership race. If these are followed, that may be a thing of the past.

I want to spend my last minute on the whistle-blowing aspect. The whistle-blowing aspect is absolutely key. As governments become more and more complex, as more and more decisions are made away from the public eye, as things are done in backrooms, are done by ministerial prerogative, are done through regulation, fewer and fewer people actually see how government programs are being operated, save and except those who work for the public service. I welcome the opportunity for public employees to be able to question this, to be able to take it to their supervisors, to be able to take it to the Integrity Commissioner and to have it come to the clear light of day. If there is government wrongdoing, it needs to be exposed at any level, whether it's by the citizens themselves or by the public employees of this province.

I do have to agree with my colleague from the Conservative Party, though, that there needs to be money put in. If the Integrity Commissioner is the person chosen to do this and not the Ombudsman, then there needs to be money to increase that staff so that this job can be done, and done well.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

JOUR DU SOUVENIR

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent for all parties to speak for up to five minutes in respect to Remembrance Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: Each year at this time, partisan political differences are put aside by members of the Legislative Assembly as we pause together to remember those Canadians who made the supreme sacrifice, the sacrifice of their lives in wars fought to defend freedom and democracy. Over the years, there have been many moving tributes paid to those whose memory we honour as a nation on November 11, tributes delivered with eloquence, passion and emotion by those who served in our armed forces in times of war. Far better than we who

did not experience military service on a personal basis, some members of the Legislative Assembly in years gone by, themselves veterans of conflicts around the world, shared with us and with those who have access to the deliberations of this House the horrors of war and the immense sacrifice made by those who fought in defence of our way of life.

What is often forgotten, as we march alongside veterans of the wars, is that so many of these men and women were very young when they entered the service of their country in the war effort overseas and that far too many did not return home to their loved ones or have the opportunity to live lives filled with all of the experiences that are available to those of us who are beneficiaries of their sacrifice.

1420

One of the most moving moments at cenotaphs across the country is the laying of the wreath by the Silver Cross mother who has seen her loved one or loved ones depart for wars in foreign lands and not return. One wonders what memories pass through their minds as they move, often haltingly and almost always with assistance, towards the war memorial in their community to lay this wreath which carries so much significance.

War is all too often glorified and mischaracterized in popular movies. The depiction of events bears little resemblance to the realities of the battlefield, for in reality our veterans will tell us that the days were grim, the conflict so very hard, and the damage inflicted both on the body and the mind often irreparable.

While it is the dead we honour in Remembrance Day services, our thoughts are also with those who returned from action sometimes scarred both physically and psychologically by the ravages of war. The tears that appear in the eyes of veterans whose memories recall all too vividly the loss of friends, the destruction of homes and the ugly wounds of conflict are understood by all of us.

As the lines of marching veterans thin from age, infirmity and death, we who remain must assume a special obligation to remember. In his poem *In Flanders Fields*, John McCrae refers to the passing of the torch to those who succeed our fallen comrades. Most assuredly, we must all, young and old, take up the challenge of those who made the supreme sacrifice on our behalf.

While the focus on remembrance and reflection is as it should be on November 11, it is essential that we who enjoy the benefits of democracy for which our veterans fought and died honour them throughout the year. The Royal Canadian Legion and other veterans' organizations across our land need our support more than ever to maintain their efforts to preserve Remembrance Day as an occasion for all Canadians to remember the sacrifices made in World War I, World War II, the Korean War and other conflicts in which our armed forces have been involved. They need our support as well to ensure that our veterans are treated with dignity, respect, generosity and compassion in their senior years as battle scars on the body and mind begin to take their toll on their lives.

It is said that in communities in the Netherlands and in France and other countries where Canadians liberated

people from their oppressors, to this day the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of those who had the yoke of occupation lifted by our Canadian forces remember and pay tribute to our fellow Canadians for the sacrifice made so very long ago.

When we see members of the Royal Canadian Legion, when we see those who served so we might enjoy the democratic freedoms that are ours today, when we see these individuals often shivering in the cold November days, poppy box in hand, let us stop to say "thank you" and let us join in two minutes of silent remembrance on November 11. Those who are no longer with us and those who returned from war should expect no less from all of us.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): I'm very pleased to rise on behalf of the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party to join in the remarks of the minister. Of course, we know why we mark Remembrance Day on the 11th day of the 11th month, but it does often find us attending ceremonies and marking this important occasion on a grey day, a chilly day, and in some respects perhaps that is appropriate. The fact that it often isn't sunny and warm may cause us to think just a little bit harder and a little bit longer about what was done for us by those we remember.

I had my first official experience with Remembrance Day as a member of provincial Parliament last year at this time and, like most members here, I attended different ceremonies from sunrise to sunset. But as we all know, like many aspects of public life, this dedication of time to Remembrance Day is unusual. Many people don't necessarily mark Remembrance Day in any particular way, and for those who do, even what started as five minutes of silence, proposed by King George V, was officially reduced to two minutes' silence when five minutes was somehow considered too long. Of course, now that period of time is often reduced to one minute. Perhaps that is why a good many of the cenotaphs across the country contain a line from the Scriptures which asks, "Is it nothing to you, all ye who pass by?"

Of course, we are here today and we will be in our constituencies on November 11, and there is not an occasion more important to us and to those constituents or more meaningful than Remembrance Day. It's customary to see our veterans at these ceremonies, proud and dignified as they are, yet it is sometimes hard to remember, as the minister said, that they were people who, 60 or more years ago, went off to war as very young men and young women.

I spoke this week to one of my own constituents, a gentleman by the name of Don Oerton of Mount Forest. Some of you may remember him as a retired inspector in the OPP. Don Oerton served in the 17th Duke of York's, signing up in 1941 at the ripe old age of 16. When I inquired as to how this had come about, he said that he had to lie a bit. When I asked him why, he said it was then seen as a great adventure, although he went on to say that it hadn't quite ended up that way. But everyone was doing it and, as he put it, he was glad he was able to do his "little bit" to help things. Don Oerton admits that the

self-described "little bit" that he did was and is dwarfed by the memories of the many friends who didn't come home, those who gave their lives to secure the freedoms that we continue to enjoy.

So we observe a moment of silence in their honour. It somehow doesn't seem like it's enough, although Don Oerton tells me that it may be better than Remembrance Day being just another day off. Maybe that one or two minutes does in fact give us more of an opportunity to really think about what and who we are remembering.

At a time when we're reminded daily of just how dangerous a place the world can still be, we honour and remember those who served and those who gave their lives in two World Wars, in Korea, our peacekeepers, who have done our country so proud, and those who serve today in faraway places, some of whom themselves have made the ultimate sacrifice for us. The collective duty and courage and sacrifice of these generations of Canadians, past and present, have indeed allowed us to have the free and open society that we do. It is often said that they went to war and, as a consequence, war has never come to us.

Nous leur devons notre sincère gratitude pour ce qu'ils ont fait pour nous, non seulement pour les actes du passé mais aussi pour la pression qu'ils et que leur famille ont endurée pour la durée de leur vie en raison de leur service et leur sacrifice.

Certainly we owe them our deepest gratitude for what they have done for us, not just then, but for the burdens they and their families have often carried for a lifetime and beyond as a consequence of their service and their sacrifice. We owe it to them to use every possible effort to keep and to make stronger a society which is not only free and open but compassionate, accepting and understanding, so that in the future, when our children and grandchildren stand here in this place or any other of the many places that we stand together on Remembrance Day, they will be remembering and paying tribute to those who served and those who perished, but they will be marking events long since past. That is because we would pray they themselves will only have ever known peace, liberty and understanding.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): On behalf of New Democrats, I feel privileged to be able to recognize the importance of Remembrance Day. I think all of us would agree that Remembrance Day is always an important occasion every year, but this year it is, I believe, more important than ever that Ontarians attend Remembrance Day ceremonies and reflect on what it all means.

This year, we must reflect on the sacrifices of our parents, our grandparents and our great-grandparents who served and sacrificed in World War I, World War II and the Korean War, and we must recognize the sacrifice of our sisters and brothers, sons and daughters, husbands and wives of a new generation of Canadians who have been ordered to put themselves in harm's way once again as we speak today. I hope that people from across Ontario will attend Remembrance Day and reflect that we

are thinking, yes, of our grandparents and great-grandparents, but we are also thinking of those who may sacrifice their life today, even as we speak. We must never forget the sacrifices of those who have served.

We need to remember one of the first messages that Remembrance Day was created to impart. The struggle to create Remembrance Day might surprise people, but it was not automatic. In the aftermath of World War I, where almost 70,000 Canadians were killed, an Ontario MP, Isaac Pedlow, introduced a motion in the House of Commons on behalf of returning veterans to institute an annual day of remembrance. As I say, Canadians would be surprised to know that the motion did not pass automatically. It took much debate and significant pressure from World War I veterans and, ultimately, an appeal by King George, before the Canadian government marked its first Remembrance Day on November 11, 1919. Perhaps it was because the war was so horrendous, perhaps it was because in the immediate aftermath of the war there were still so many open wounds, but it's surprising that it actually took a concerted effort by veterans to have Remembrance Day recognized.

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Those veterans wanted us all to know how horrible war is as an experience. When they joined the Canadian military in 1914 or 1915 or 1916, as my grandfather did, they were told that this was the war to end all wars. They were told that they were fighting the ultimate battle to ensure the world would live in peace. One of the things I think we need to recognize is that we have let them down. Because young men, young women, if we look back on the last 80 years, 90 years, have repeatedly been asked to sacrifice their lives in order that the rest of us may live in peace and relative contentment. That sacrifice is being asked again today. As we speak in this Legislature, as we go on about our daily lives as if everything is unfolding as it should in society, young men and young women may be sacrificing their very lives.

So I hope that more Canadians than ever will attend Remembrance Day ceremonies and will reflect upon the fact that the peace we know, that the orderly lives we're able to live, that getting up in the morning and going home at night and spending time with our kids is very much a luxury that some Canadians today cannot enjoy and some Canadians today may never enjoy again. I hope that all of us will take the time over the next few days, as we move towards Remembrance Day and on Remembrance Day itself, to reflect on that.

The Speaker: I would ask all members and our guests if you would rise with me for a time of observance and silence for Remembrance Day.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker: Thank you. Lest we forget.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: Just for the information of members of the Legislature, I have logistical information. There will be a Remembrance Day ceremony on the front lawn of Queen's Park on Remembrance Day at the new memorial which was erected to our veterans. So that will take place on Remembrance Day. Any members of the

Legislature or the public who are able to attend may do so. I recognize that most of us will be in our own communities at that time, but I wanted to let members of the Legislature know that that will be happening on Remembrance Day.

CLERK OF THE ASSEMBLY

GREFFIER DE L'ASSEMBLÉE

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table a letter of resignation from Claude DesRosiers, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly. Mr. DesRosiers was appointed to the service of this House in October 1986. Having served as Clerk for 20 years, he has decided to heed the beckoning calm that comes with retirement. He is looking forward to spending some long-overdue time with his wife, Michele, who joins us here today; his children, Jean, Louie and Lucie; their spouses; and, most of the all, with his grandchildren, Sacha, Eve and Noah.

The members themselves will presently have the opportunity to convey their sentiments to the Clerk on this, his last day seated at the table. However, if the House will permit me a brief moment, I would like to express on behalf of the Office of the Speaker, the table and all staff of the Assembly our heartfelt thanks and best wishes.

We will miss your calm and dignity and particularly your wise counsel. This place has benefited greatly from your considerable expertise over the last 20 years, and you can be secure in the knowledge that you're leaving behind you a strong, efficient and highly professional organization, and of this you should be proud. Put up your feet now, Mr. Clerk; you've earned it.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to pay tribute to the Clerk from representatives of each of the three political parties represented in the House.

The Speaker: Mr. Bradley has asked for unanimous consent. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: It is with deep regret that we come to a day when an officer of this House who has distinguished himself with his professionalism, with his dignity, with his competence and with his acts of professionalism throughout is going to retire. It is a difficult time for all of us.

The Clerk of the Ontario Legislature, as so many of the officers of the Legislature do, represents the continuity, represents the kind of impartiality that does not find itself in the benches of the various political parties. We are not impartial people; we are people who vigorously defend our positions and engage in some rather interesting debate in this Legislature. But we rely heavily upon the officers of the House to ensure that there is decorum, to ensure that the procedures that take place are

within the rules of the Ontario Legislature and to provide us with the kind of guidance that we need.

Claude DesRosiers has a long and distinguished career, and I'm going to share with members of the Assembly some of his career highlights. He was the appeals officer with the Public Service Commission way back in 1969. He was obviously very young at that time. He was the head of the staffing section, House of Commons; assistant chief, French journals branch, and then became the chief of that branch; the principal clerk of the journals branch of the House of Commons; principal clerk and table duties, House of Commons; special adviser to the committee on the reform of the House of Commons in 1984 and 1985; principal clerk, committees and private legislation directorate; and then, of course, was appointed as Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on October 1, 1986.

He has many interesting activities that I won't go through outside of this Legislature, but suffice to say that he's been deeply involved in his community and in the community at large, not only within the confines of the province of Ontario but right across the country and internationally.

We have been privileged to have a person of his experience, a person of his competence and of his professionalism serving us in the Legislative Assembly in the position of Clerk. I know that whatever he decides to do in the years to come, he will be reflecting upon his many years in this assembly and the friendships he has gained over those years.

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The Clerk, as we say, is impartial. He's a table officer; he provides us with advice from time to time. But I think those who have come into the assembly have found Claude DesRosiers to be also a friend and confidante. Although, as I say, we will miss him in the weeks and months and years to come, we will retain many fond memories of the very central role he has played.

The public at large see us. The news media do not often train their cameras on the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario or write much about him. They write about the interesting activities that take place within this House. But they should know that Claude DesRosiers has played a central role, albeit in the background, albeit not in the confrontational atmosphere that is this House, and we are grateful to him for this.

We wish him well in his retirement. I know that if they had the opportunity to do so, all who have served in this assembly since 1986 would welcome the opportunity to thank Claude DesRosiers and wish him well in his retirement, as I do on behalf the government caucus today.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): I appreciate the opportunity on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus to offer a few words on the occasion of Clerk DesRosiers's announced retirement.

Claude DesRosiers's retirement, I think you will agree, is a very significant event in this place. We don't see a change in this position on too many occasions over history. Claude's predecessor, Rod Lewis, who was here

when I arrived in 1981, was in the job for 31 years. Rod had succeeded his father, who held the position for 28 years. I'm not sure if one of Claude's sons has his application in or not, but we'll find out shortly, I'm sure. My point is that three Clerks serving this assembly over the span of 79 years is quite remarkable.

I'm told that two of the most memorable experiences of Claude's time in this place were when the House sat continuously for 24 hours: one dealt with the megacity legislation, in 1997; the other was when an opposition member refused to leave his seat after being named by the Speaker, and became somewhat infamous for his unique use of a milk bottle. But little did Clerk DesRosiers realize that the member in question would become his boss when he was elected Speaker in 2003.

Contrary to popular opinion, I'm advised that Claude DesRosiers does have a sense of humour; he just doesn't show it in this place. The table has its own set of standing orders, and they include, "Never laugh, even if you're dying inside."

I'm also assured that the Clerk is not leaving because of his age. Last night we had a chat at the reception in the dining room, and he advised me that "old is when you're cautioned to slow down by the doctor instead of by the police," and that hasn't happened yet. I told you he had a sense of humour.

What the Clerk is doing is setting aside much-deserved time for reading historical novels, which he loves; for his gardening, especially his roses, I'm told; and for the true loves of his life: his wife, his sons, his daughter and his three grandchildren.

Clerk DesRosiers has an impressive record of accomplishment at both the federal and provincial levels, a record that has been noted by many and that has generated enormous respect for his knowledge and experience, well beyond our provincial and national borders. I cite just one example: his service as parliamentary adviser for the interparliamentary union in Estonia, Latvia, Cambodia, Lithuania and Haiti. Clerk DesRosiers has done our province proud.

Claude, you have provided outstanding service to your country and your province. You will be missed. Godspeed; enjoy the years ahead.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): To you, Mr. DesRosiers, as House leader for the New Democrats I want to tell you first that I've been compelled to share these five minutes with at least one other colleague. That's number one.

Number two, you came here 20 years ago. You had but two years of service here when I came two years later, 18 years ago. I apologize. I do want to thank you, on behalf of all of us, for your incredible skill, your acumen, your talent, your accessibility, your fairness, your even-handedness.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Patience.

Mr. Kormos: As Mr. Hampton says, your incredible and sorely tested, frequently tested patience.

For a newly elected MPP, for a young MPP, you were an incredible source of information. I speak on behalf of

oh, so many who, in their neophyte years, are grateful to you for your guidance, for your assistance and for your inevitable non-partisan eagerness to provide access to not just the standing orders and precedents that may have been established from time to time but to some practical experience based on many years of service in Parliament here. So I wish you well.

New Democrats regret, truly, that you are leaving us now but we look forward, knowing that you'll make great contributions in the years that come. We thank you very much, sir. I want to tell you that, for all of us, it's been an incredible pleasure, a delight, a luxury to have been able to work with you.

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-Baie James): Monsieur DesRosiers, c'est avec un peu de tristesse qu'on se trouve ici aujourd'hui. Ça fait 16 ans que je suis à cette Assemblée. J'ai appris beaucoup faisant affaire avec les commentateurs que vous avez donnés ces années. Un nouveau membre qui entre a toujours les idées de changer le monde, d'être capable de faire la lutte et de toujours achever son but, et vous avez montré comment achever ces buts selon les règles de la Chambre; ça, c'est important.

Je veux dire aujourd'hui—ce qui est intéressant, et je pense que c'est quelque chose que vous êtes capable de prendre avec fierté—que c'est non seulement les députés ici aujourd'hui à l'Assemblée qui vous disent bonjour et nos remerciements pour votre service à cette Assemblée, mais je regarde ici le « staff » de l'Assemblée et on a tout le monde, les directeurs des différents départements, le « staff » et d'autres avec les greffiers, pour aussi dire merci beaucoup. Ce qu'on a besoin de comprendre, c'est que vous êtes comme la personne en chef de l'Assemblée, sous le Président, et vous êtes responsable de ce monde. Ce monde veut vous dire merci beaucoup aujourd'hui. Vous avez été un directeur avec de la patience, quelqu'un qui comprend sa tâche, et qu'il a besoin de laisser aux autres l'habileté de s'épanouir dans leurs devoirs et dans leurs responsabilités. Vous allez nous manquer, certainement.

Il faut aussi dire quelque chose d'autre, parce que vous avez laissé un petit quelque chose en arrière: un personnel très bien préparé. Je regarde les greffiers qui sont ici aujourd'hui; on ne va pas les nommer tous. Si on a les meilleurs greffiers dans l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario, c'est grâce à votre leadership. Comme Greffier en charge, vous assurez que tous les comités et que la table elle-même ont les greffiers nécessaires pour prendre la relève. Ce n'est pas tout le monde qui peut partir sachant que, quand vous partez: « Envoyez la bonne main. » On vous dit, monsieur le Greffier, monsieur DesRosiers, que vous nous avez laissés en très bonnes mains. On vous remercie.

The Speaker: Well, thank you. We will now revert to normal practice. Oral questions.

Mr. Kormos: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Yes, this being the 25th anniversary of Randy Rath's membership in the Queen's Park press gallery, I seek unanimous consent to wear the Randy Rath official shirt. This is a prop that I would beg you to seize.

The Speaker: Mr. Kormos has asked for unanimous consent to—no? No.

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ORAL QUESTIONS

VEHICLE SAFETY

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Acting Premier. Would he be kind enough to tell us what has happened since last October, when the former Minister of Transportation said, with respect to an alarmingly bad safety rate for U-Haul vehicles, “I have to bring the hammer down”? What’s happened since then?

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Transportation): I’m pleased to respond to the question. What in fact has happened is that on September 14, 2006, the ministry ordered U-Haul to take action to improve their safety performance. They went before the deputy registrar. The deputy registrar put in place a pending licence suspension that had requirements attached to it. They had to improve their mechanical, they had to improve their driver record, they had to have monthly audits of what their action plan was, and any failure would result in that licence being suspended. They have now taken the deputy registrar’s decision to an appeal court, so I cannot discuss what that appeal is, but certainly, from the ministry’s perspective, we are working with the deputy registrar to ensure that only safe vehicles of U-Haul are on our roads.

Mr. Tory: The facts are that we only wish the minister was doing what she said. It’s another case—in this case, a fantastic case—of the Premier and his ministers saying anything at all to look as if they’re taking action when in fact they’ve done nothing.

Last October, CTV’s W-FIVE ran a story that reported that in tests conducted during the summer of 2005, 693 trucks from 14 rental companies were tested. The U-Haul failure rate was five times the industry average. More tests were conducted in the summer of this year, 2006, and they found the failure rate was—you guessed it—five times the industry average.

There has been no hammer brought down. Instead, the Minister of Transportation suspended the U-Haul licence but never enforced it. U-Haul continues to operate and continues to have unsafe vehicles on the road today. Why hasn’t the minister enforced the suspension that she herself ordered? Why hasn’t it been done?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I guess if we are going to actually refer to documents, you should refer to the August and September report from CBC, which dealt with the fact that we are the only province that brought the hammer down on U-Haul. No other province is doing what we are doing. We have our due process put in place

with the deputy registrar, who has the requirement to do the licensing. We have put very critical criteria in front of U-Haul that say, “Shape up or ship out.” There is no question: They are monitored monthly. If they do not improve, they will not be on our roads.

The challenge we’ve got is that they’re on everybody else’s roads and they cross our borders. So we’ve got to ensure that we work together with our other provinces so that those mechanically unfit vehicles are not on our roads. The deputy registrar has a due process in law, required by this government and previously by other governments, and we are following due process. They are monitored monthly. If they do not meet the criteria of the deputy registrar, which they are now appealing in court, by the way, we will suspend their licence.

Mr. Tory: The fact is that it was in 2005 that the previous minister said they were going to bring the hammer down. This minister is acting as if they’re bringing the hammer down now, when in fact they said they would do it well over a year ago, and they still haven’t. The trucks are still on the road. Regardless of where they come from—it doesn’t matter—they’re driving on Ontario roads and not following the standards.

Here’s what the minister herself said to CTV: “I do not want anybody in an unsafe vehicle on our roads where there would be any consequences. So if they don’t clean up their act, they’re gone.” Well, they’re not gone; they’re still here. It doesn’t make any sense. It is simply another broken promise from the McGuinty government.

A year ago, the minister was going to bring down the hammer. They didn’t do anything. A year later, there’s been no improvement, the same failure rate on the safety standards, and again the McGuinty government does nothing. Will the minister tell us why she will not suspend U-Haul’s licence and enforce it? Get on with doing it.

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I’m pleased to respond. I might suggest that the gentleman look to his right and to his left, because for eight years they did nothing.

When it was identified, the ministry got in touch with U-Haul, brought them into our office and gave them the ultimatum. They brought forward their work response. It was insufficient. We then said, “If you don’t put another in place, it goes to the deputy registrar. We will suspend.” It went to the deputy registrar. It’s under suspension, pending these requirements. If they do not fulfill the requirements, they’re off our roads. They are now appealing that to the tribunal because they didn’t like the fact that we put such strident criteria there.

There is no question that this involves cross-border issues, because if you look at those U-Haul licence plates, they’re not from Ontario; they’re from Arizona.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): New question.

Mr. Tory: My question again is for the Acting Premier, same subject. I’m not sure if the minister is implying that, because they have Arizona plates, we’re supposed to just give up on that and let people use unsafe trucks.

Just two days ago this House passed legislation requiring that all passengers in a vehicle wear a seat belt. Last November 30, 2005, less than six weeks after CTV quoted the former minister as saying the hammer would be brought down, which it still hasn't been, Gordon Annis was killed while riding in the passenger seat of a U-Haul truck with a seat belt that didn't work. Months later, after that, U-Haul spectacularly failed its safety test again, and the minister lets them continue to operate.

It seems as if this is another case, yet again, of the McGuinty government saying anything to try and win favour, but not actually doing anything. If this government is concerned enough to have introduced the legislation which we, together, passed on seat belts, why won't you enforce a business licence suspension that your own government ordered? Why won't you do it?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: Again I'm pleased to respond. We are in fact doing what we said we would do. We are monitoring, assessing and ensuring that those vehicles on our roads are safe. We are doing far more blitzes, not only with our own inspections but with the municipal police and the Ontario Provincial Police. They are at random and they are specific to U-Haul. We've actually sent our inspectors into the rental agencies themselves. We are trying to get that rate down where they're mechanically unfit, and we're prepared to work with the industry to make a difference.

If in fact they do not live up to our requirements and our standards by the deputy registrar, who's put it very clearly that they have to improve their mechanical fitness, their driving training, and deal with the challenges that face them, then they will have their licence suspended. It's called due process.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): It's called "do nothing."

Mr. Tory: We will continue with the inspections, we will continue with the random ones, and they will have the monthly audit. I can assure the member, if they do not live up to their workplace plan—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tory: In fact, as the member next to me says, it's not due process; it's do nothing between 2005 and 2006. The whole time between 2005 and 2006, you did nothing, and the failure rate this past summer, a year later, is still five times the average.

I can tell you that what the minister's done is give a reprieve to a company that has a proven track record of failing the safety obligations it owes to its customers. It is a company that puts Arizona plates on its vehicles so that when the plates get pulled off, the company can order new plates from Arizona and carry on.

From the W-FIVE story:

"Lyn Viner inspected and fixed U-Haul trucks. He said ... that he was forced to put unsafe trucks and trailers on the road. 'What would happen at the end of the month ... we were told, if there were minor infractions, pass it. Lights that would be out, back-up lights not working,

marker lights out, turn signals ... that was fine. We were told, at the end of the month, everything has to roll, no matter what.'" That's what you've done: nothing but let them continue to do that.

What is the government waiting for? Why won't you take action—

The Speaker: The question's been asked.

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Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I'm sure the member of the opposition recognizes and realizes that the deputy registrar, who has the licensee provision requirement, is arm's length from the government in law.

But aside from that, the fact of the matter is, I realize you might be unhappy because you did nothing for eight years. We're doing something now. We're not sitting on our hands. When I found out about it—we're on top of it and we will deal with it.

We have the safest roads in Ontario for a reason, for two years in a row: because we won't put up with unsafe vehicles on our roads. We work with the police, municipally and provincially, and our own inspectors. They're random. Nobody knows we're doing this. We've targeted U-Haul specifically so that we can ensure that they are living up to that workplace plan that they've put in place. They are now, as I indicated, saying they want to appeal that process that we have. We are standing firm on what is the—

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr. Tory: When the minister mentions "arm's length," I'm sure she's referring to the arm of her predecessor, because it was his arm undoubtedly that was going to bring the hammer down. That's what he said. He said he was going to bring the hammer down.

The minister talks about what she won't put up with. Let's talk about what she won't put up with. Let's run through it one more time. Last year, a year ago, after horrific failures in U-Haul safety tests, the former minister says he's going to bring the hammer down. Six weeks later, a man dies after travelling in a U-Haul truck with a faulty seat belt. The following summer—a year later, this summer—U-Haul again fails its safety inspections, at the exact same rate as previously. So you've done nothing over the course of the succeeding year. The current minister signs an order to suspend the licence and then, for some mysterious reason, rescinds her own suspension and gives the company 12 months to clean up its act.

How is it that this government will say anything at all to look like you're taking action but won't actually do anything? Why didn't you take action a year ago and do something then, as your predecessor said he would? You've done nothing.

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I should just set the record straight. I didn't sign the suspension order. It's the deputy registrar who signs it, who has the requirements for the licensing.

What we did is, we put in place the need for him to look at a very serious problem in our province; no question. Our young people who rent those vehicles need to

be in safe vehicles. You and I don't disagree on that. How we go about doing it in due process is a requirement that governments work under. The due process is, we called them in and we required that they put in place—it wasn't satisfactory, what they gave us. We said, "Go back and fix it more." They did. The deputy registrar then looked at it, and he put in the requirements, not me. He's the one who said they had to do these things. We're going to monitor. We're still going to do the blitzes. I assure you, we will continue to press to keep unsafe vehicles of any—

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. New question.

NATIVE LAND DISPUTE

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Deputy Premier. It's becoming very clear that Premier McGuinty's squabbling and bickering with Ottawa has paralyzed the work of the Ontario government, to the detriment of ordinary Ontarians. Marie Trainer, the mayor of Caledonia, said this about your squabbling and bickering: "They are just playing games right now. We're in the middle. We're the ones suffering. I'd like them to stop acting like children. I wish they would quit holding Caledonia residents as hostages."

Deputy Premier, why are the needs and priorities of working families across Ontario taking a back seat to Premier McGuinty's squabbling, bickering and electioneering?

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): As usual with the honourable member, it's what he doesn't say that would be helpful for the context of his question, because what he doesn't say when he speaks about the municipal leader that he quotes in his question, Mayor Trainer, is that she also said that the need was there for the federal government to come to the table and to take a lead.

It's odd that the honourable member who so often depends upon the words of Chief Angus Toulouse didn't use those today either, but here's what was said in a release: "This Conservative government claims it is a government that takes action, but when it comes to First Nations they are completely missing in action'...."

"The reality is that issues related to First Nations lands are a direct and clear federal responsibility."

The honourable member knows this well because he asks these questions very regularly in the House. It's interesting, I suppose, that he thinks we should go it alone on an issue where, to the point, the federal government is clearly in the lead. It is Ontario's obligation to ensure that the federal government fulfills their constitutional responsibilities, and we will continue on that path until that is done.

Mr. Hampton: Allen MacNaughton is chief of the Six Nations. He says, "[I]t is with great concern that the Hodiyneshoh find the crown in right of Ontario and Canada engaged in playing politics in the media."

Deputy Premier, ordinary Ontarians want their governments to work for them. Instead, Dalton McGuinty

and Stephen Harper are working on their election campaigns. I ask this question: When is the McGuinty government going to stop squabbling, going to stop bickering and start getting some results for the ordinary people of Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: We note the defensiveness on the part of the NDP, seeing that the federal government in Ottawa is really their government. But it's interesting that the honourable member is unwilling to stand in his place and make the case with respect to Ontario. He raises, on a regular basis, the issue of responsibility—primacy of responsibility—to the federal government, but for today's purposes, that's not evident. In his question he quotes someone—in this case, Chief MacNaughton—but what he doesn't read from Chief MacNaughton's very own release is the following: "but we agree [that] the emphasis on resolution must come from the federal crown. It is with the federal crown that Six Nations agreements have been made."

So we agree that this is a complex issue. On behalf of Ontarians, and with a view toward a resolution that involves people working together and talking together to come to appropriate conclusions, we have done our part and we have been there. But our frustration speaks to the fact that, on one hand, all the parties agree. The necessity is there for federal government leadership. We press for it, we call for it, and the honourable member, the leader of the New Democratic Party—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: Yesterday, after the Premier said no to a request from children of Cat Lake First Nation school, who have limited access to safe, clean drinking water, Mushkegowuk Grand Chief Stan Louttit sent us a letter saying, "If a First Nation goes to the province for assistance ... the province should treat this request as they would any resident of Ontario." But rather than responding to this urgent request, the McGuinty government wants to use First Nations in a game of political Ping-Pong with the federal government.

My question again is this: When is the McGuinty government going to put the needs of Ontario residents ahead of the Premier's political agenda of squabbling and bickering with the federal government?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: There we have it from the honourable member: He has managed in three short questions to get himself on all sides of the issue, as is standard. But where is the consistency from the honourable member? On a case-by-case basis, very regularly he brings to us the voices of the Chiefs of Ontario, the most significant voice of the leadership of First Nations. Their point and position on this couldn't be clearer. I'll read further from a release I quoted a moment ago: "This is yet another example of this government's"—being the federal government—"refusal to accept and fulfill their lawful obligations."

So the point is clear: In Caledonia, the record of a government willing to do its part is very, very evident. We provided provincial money to purchase the land,

business assistance money, signage and markings on the land, assistance for residents that is forthcoming, a marketing campaign, a new school fence and security cameras—

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Now the critic from the Conservative Party, who only has one position, which is to go in with guns blazing, is heckling me, and not even from his seat in the Legislature.

But the point is—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question, the leader of the third party.

NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT SUPPLEMENT

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Again to the Acting Premier: You will know that there are 443,000 children—one in six children—living in poverty in Ontario. The national child benefit supplement provides low-income kids with almost \$1,500 a year for essentials like food, clothing and shelter. This is federal money that should be going to those lowest-income Ontario children. Premier McGuinty called the clawback of that money by the province wrong and vowed to end it, but you haven't.

So my question is this: Instead of bickering and squabbling with Ottawa, why doesn't the McGuinty government roll up its sleeves and make sure that this federal child benefit money finds its way to the poorest kids in Ontario, as you promised to do?

1510

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I'm very pleased to answer the question from the leader of the third party. Again, this government has invested and will continue to invest every year more than \$10 billion to help parents and children who are living in poverty.

When parents succeed, children succeed. So since we took office, we have created 254,000 new jobs; we have increased the minimum wage; we have created an emergency energy fund; we have increased social assistance by 5%; we have provided free vaccinations for children, over one million kids treated, saving families \$600 per year; and we have also invested \$8.5 million for student nutrition programs, 84,000 more children being served, an increase of 45%—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: I'm not sure what the minister's answer has to do with the question. Here is the reality of the issue: People across Ontario see the McGuinty government conducting a campaign of arguing, squabbling, bickering with the federal government when we have literally 443,000 Ontario children living in poverty. You

could actually do something meaningful. You could stop clawing back that federal money from those lowest-income Ontario children. You had the money to do that over the last fiscal year; you chose not to.

My question is fairly straightforward: Instead of promoting this campaign of squabbling, bickering, fighting with the federal government, why don't you do something very practical? Why don't you end your clawback of the national child benefit supplement and stop taking \$1,500 a year of federal money away from the poorest—

The Speaker: Thank you. The question has been asked. Minister?

Hon. Mrs. Meilleur: Again, this government takes children's poverty very seriously. We have invested to try to solve this problem, and we will continue to work towards that.

The leader of the third party wanted to show that his government did everything they could and are working towards helping children. I'm going to cite to you what his party has done, what legacy they left here in Ontario. When they left government, one in five children was on social assistance. What they also did was increase taxes on low-income Ontarians. They removed more than 230 drugs from the Ontario drug benefit plan. They increased long-term-care daily rates by up to 38% and they—

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: I fail to understand what the minister's answer, or supposed answer, has to do with the question. When Dalton McGuinty campaigned for votes, he didn't promise bickering, squabbling and fighting, blaming and backbiting with the federal government. He promised things like stopping the clawback of the national child benefit supplement to make life better and more affordable for the lowest-income children in Ontario—not just part of the clawback; he promised to stop the clawback, the whole clawback and nothing but the clawback.

So my question again is—this is an example of something that you could do that would make a practical difference in the lives of some of the lowest-income kids in Ontario, but instead of doing it, you conduct a never-ending campaign of bickering, squabbling and fighting with the federal government. When are you going—

The Speaker: Thank you. The question has been asked. Minister?

Hon. Mrs. Meilleur: Again, I wanted to remind the member that we have increased social assistance by 5%, and we will continue to develop policy to help children in situations of poverty, because this government believes that every child should be given a chance. We are working towards that.

I'd like to remind you also that since we came into power, we have stopped the clawback of the increase every year. It represents \$1,600 more to a family of two children every year, and we are determined that we will do everything we can to help every child who is in a situation of poverty—not only those whose parents are on Ontario Works, but every poor child in Ontario.

TORONTO EXPO 2015

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Tourism. It really continues on the theme of the cost of the squabbling and the bickering from the McGuinty government. This time it's on the subject of Expo 2015. I can only say this to the minister: The people of Ontario are very, very disappointed at the complete lack of leadership by the McGuinty Liberal government on this file. The minister did not passionately push this file. The minister sent junior-level representation to the meeting last Friday. The minister did nothing after that meeting to push this file passionately and to try to make it happen when it was clear the bid was in trouble. Then the McGuinty Liberal government offered nothing to try to make this happen—the only ones who offered nothing, let alone a blank cheque.

My question is this: Why did the minister just give up on Expo 2015 and the jobs, the tourism and the economic development that went with it? Why did you give up?

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Here's yet another example of the Leader of the Opposition wanting to be on all sides of all issues. I asked you in this House, and you said you would not subject the people of the province of Ontario to writing a blank cheque to cover any unknown deficit that this particular endeavour would incur. You said you would not, but now you want to go around pretending, "Well, there's something else that could have been done."

I want to tell you, sir, that the particular bid was based on the fact that somebody was prepared to write a blank cheque to cover that particular deficit. We in the province of Ontario are not prepared to do that. You get up in the House along with your colleagues and ask us to spend money on health care, on education, on a number of other endeavours. You are going to take \$2.5 billion out of the revenue stream in the province of Ontario, and now you want us to write a blank cheque, because that's the only way this would proceed.

I would say that you should speak to your federal friends—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Tory: I'm sorry that when it comes to an opportunity to have tourism, jobs and profile for Ontario, the minister doesn't understand the difference between a blank cheque and doing nothing, which is what he did: absolutely nothing. I will say that I'm told the Minister of Finance, to his credit, did try to do something and make some effort over the course of the past 24 hours, but the damage from the inaction of the preceding months was done, and the bid seemed doomed to fail.

The McGuinty government let this bid die. The McGuinty government let the tourism die that went with it. The McGuinty government let the jobs and investment die that went with it.

My question is this: Why did you, through your inaction over months and especially the last week, let this

bid for Expo 2015 die? Why did you throw in the towel? Why did you do that?

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I want to tell the Leader of the Opposition, first of all, that I know he likes to denigrate the public service of the province of Ontario. The person you have called "junior" is Michael Langford, who is the chair of the steering committee on Expo 2015. He was at Friday's meeting. He has been the chief negotiator for the province of Ontario. If you want to denigrate this public servant, that's fine.

The Minister of Finance has been engaged in conversations, as have I. We have been the ones who have been side by side with the city of Toronto. We provided the upfront money for the due diligence; we provided the upfront money for the exploration of this particular initiative.

It really boils down to, according to the bureau of international expositions: Is somebody prepared to write a blank cheque? You can talk about all of the other actions you want to talk about, but I ask you, sir, if you were the Premier of the province of Ontario, would you write a blank cheque for a deficit when nobody knows what the amount of that deficit would be? If not, you can't be on all sides of the issue.

1520

WOMEN'S ISSUES

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): To the Acting Premier: In June, a number of women representing women's coalitions and other groups from across the province wrote to Premier McGuinty. They requested a meeting to discuss critical issues facing women in Ontario today; issues like poverty, issues like ending the clawback of the national child benefit supplement, issues like the need for child care and issues like violence. But the Premier ignored them. He never responded to their letter, and no meeting ever happened. Five months later, women's organizations came here today demanding to be heard. Can you tell them, Deputy Premier, why is Dalton McGuinty refusing to meet with women's groups like those who came here today?

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I've been around here long enough to know that I shouldn't accept at face value all the information that the honourable member brings. I would be pleased to say to any group that feels it didn't get the opportunity to discuss with the government important matters related to the women's agenda—of course, my colleague the Minister of Economic Development is not with us today, but I know that she would be very able to answer that. For my own part, I'd be very happy to commit to that group that if they wish to arrange a meeting with me, I'd be very happy to do that.

I'm glad to note that our government has been working on a variety of issues related to women's issues. If the member has a more particular question in mind for his supplementary, I'd be very happy to do my best to answer it and to afford to the honourable members who

are absent today the opportunity to discuss this in further detail with the honourable member at a future date.

Mr. Hampton: Well, these women's organizations tried repeatedly to get a meeting with the Premier, so they came here today as part of their Step It Up campaign. They say it's time for the McGuinty government to tackle the root causes of violence, rather than trying to only manage its effects. That means addressing poverty, racism, child care and affordable housing. They say this government's broken promises—a broken promise to end the clawback and your broken promise to build affordable housing—are hurting women across the province. Eileen Morrow, a member of the coalition, says, "That kind of political leadership ... is costing women's lives."

Deputy Premier, I ask you again: Will the Premier step it up and meet with these women's organizations, if not now, then very soon?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): I know that the minister responsible for women's issues and Minister of Economic Development has been meeting with many of the leaders—not only those present at the event, which is going to take place both in Toronto and Ottawa, but with many leaders—not only on the subject that was brought up today, but even more generally with respect to domestic violence.

This government's investment and action through its domestic violence action plan is completely and totally unprecedented. Never before has any government in Ontario taken the kind of action under our domestic violence action plan, one of the issues that was raised, that this government did. That's what the Premier and Sandra Pupatello did.

Another matter that did come up and was discussed today at the event was support for the changes to the human rights system in the form of Bill 107. Support for Bill 107 was clear throughout the event by many of the people who were spokespersons in it. I would ask the member to ask himself what his position on Bill 107 is and why it is—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

EDUCATION

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): My question is for the Minister of Education. Bill 52, learning to age 18, is in committee and going through clause-by-clause this afternoon. If passed, this legislation will create an environment for Ontario students to keep learning to 18 or graduate through creative incentives that realize their individual strengths and potentials. Stakeholders, parents and the people of Ontario know that the McGuinty government is committed to increasing the graduation rate and focusing on student success. We have seen an increase in the graduation rate from 68% when we came into office to 71% last year. That actually means that 6,000 more students finish high school and improve their future prospects in multiplying their hope.

As successful as that is, we need to do more and better. We have set the bar higher: that the students of

Ontario should achieve a high school diploma. The opposition voted against Bill 52 on second reading. While the opposition may not believe that we should keep learning until 18, we do.

Minister, can you tell the House what we're doing to transform the high schools through Bill 52, please?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): Thank you to the member for Brant for the question. We are engaged in a very serious transformation of the high schools in the province. Bill 52, on learning to 18, is only a part of our \$1.3-billion student success strategy. The government is committed to helping students graduate through a variety of programs, and I want to talk a little bit about those. We're expanding co-op opportunities. We're increasing the partnerships. Students may count two co-op credits towards their diploma. We're creating a high-skills major which allows students to bundle a minimum of courses together and be ready to go into the workforce. We're allowing students to engage in dual credits and to get credits outside of the mainstream learning environment.

What's really important is that the pilots we have already put in place are working. Here's a student from Brantford: "The schools within a college program allows students to explore the 'trades' while being treated as adults. I love the college setting ... I like working at my own pace to make up credits and find that I try harder than ever to complete work. Students are able to recover credits in order to graduate and now they feel like they have a future." It's working already, and the bill—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Levac: I appreciate your mentioning the program. I was fortunate enough to go to the graduation: 32 kids who were at risk of losing their education graduated. There wasn't a dry eye in the house, including the parents. I want to thank you for the creative way in which we're doing this.

The amendments to the bill that you're speaking of are exactly what we need to strengthen the legislation and give our students hope, along with their parents. The McGuinty government listened to our partners and took the necessary time to get the bill right. I know that changes have been made to even further enhance student achievement, because we know that when you give students an option, you get results and hope.

Bill 52, learning to 18, provides greater opportunities for students to learn inside and outside of the traditional classroom setting. We are modernizing and customizing how we deliver education in this province.

OSSTF held a press conference today here at Queen's Park. They indicated that they still have some concerns with sections in the bill, but they said, during the committee and afterwards, along with our other partners, that they support—

The Speaker: The question's been asked. Minister?

Hon. Ms. Wynne: I think the process we've gone through with Bill 52 is a very important one. We listened to our partners; we listened to the teachers' federations,

who are the people on the front line. They are the people who understand how our policies are going to work when they're out in the school. So we made amendments to the legislation that would tighten up some of the language that would guarantee ministry oversight of the agreements between boards and other providers. We made sure that the equivalent learning credit will only be issued by a principal of a school, which was an issue raised by the federations. And we've put safeguards in place to make sure that the standards and guidelines for the equivalent learning procedures will ensure the highest quality of education, wherever the students are learning.

I want to give credit to all the teachers' federations who worked hard with us. It's the way government should work. It's the way legislation—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): To the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship: Last December, when members of your government stood in their place in this very House and voted in favour of implementing a comprehensive job strategy, Ontarians facing layoffs and job losses were given a new sense of hope. When your government was sworn in back in 2003, you promised to respect the traditions of this House. Traditionally speaking, a motion passed unanimously by this House is a promise that should be followed through on. You have failed to do that.

In September alone, 2,700 jobs were lost in the auto parts sector, and the carnage continues in the manufacturing sector: Affinia in St. Catharines, 250 jobs lost; Lipton-Unilever in Belleville, 145 jobs lost; GH Packaging in Belleville, 80 jobs lost; Emerson Tool in Markham, 380 jobs lost; and, most recently, another 250 jobs were lost. Minister, when are you going to recognize the depth of the catastrophe that your government's punitive tax policies have created and bring in a jobs plan, as promised?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship): I want to thank the member for asking the question.

Mr. Speaker, let me first tell you about U-Haul. We did more than they ever did on U-Haul. They did nothing.

Let me just quote you a couple of numbers. The member is saying that this plant closed, that plant closed, and then he goes and apologizes. But let me say this: Sutherland Global Services created 1,000 high-paying jobs in Windsor, November 2006; Client Logic Corp., Sudbury, November 2006, 300 jobs. In Belleville, Kellogg's is going to create about 100 jobs. In Simcoe, there's a 200,000-square-foot manufacturing facility being created. It will create 250 jobs. DMI Industries in Stevensville will employ another 110 people.

We actually have a plan, and we are working to make sure that there's the right environment for business people to succeed—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary.

1530

Mr. Chudleigh: I corrected the record this morning, Minister, which I did at my earliest opportunity. It's not like the broken promises that your government has made, and it never had the decency to apologize to the people of Ontario for doing those terrible things that have caused such hardship in this province.

The bottom line, Minister, is that closures like these have become all too common in your government's Ontario. The reality is that most of the jobs you've announced as being created won't exist until after the next election, and many of them not until 2008 and 2009. Instead of passing the buck and saying anything just to get elected, Minister, why don't you get down to business and implement a comprehensive job strategies program, as you promised to do in this House?

Hon. Mr. Takhar: Let me say this again: Today in Windsor, the Premier and my colleagues are announcing the creation of 1,000 more jobs; yesterday in Sudbury, 300 jobs. There's no idea of making statements and then going around and apologizing to the people that you made wrong statements. It's about time to stand up and tell the real facts. You did nothing in the small business sector for nine years in this province. We're going to make sure that the small business sector is successful, and we're going to make sure that we have the right environment for industry to be successful.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): My question is to the Minister of Education. Minister, one out of three high school students drops out of high school without graduating. Dalton McGuinty promised to take action, yet this year your government cut grants for inner-city schools and students at risk by \$120 million. Bill 52 will make a bad situation worse. You've already admitted the bill is flawed, and this afternoon you'll attempt, by my estimation, some frantic last-minute amendments. Why don't you scrap this bill and instead get to work on fixing the funding formula, which students, parents and educators all agree is the real source of the problem?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): I do not understand why the member opposite would accept that a 30% dropout rate is okay. I do not understand why the member opposite would not support a piece of legislation and programs that are part of that legislation that are working to keep students in school, to keep them graduating. Some 6,000 more students are graduating this year than last year.

A student from Thunder Bay, who is involved in a hospitality services specialist program—one of our pilots—says, "I thought this dual credit hospitality program was great. I want to be in this industry in the future—so this program is giving me a head start on my career." Why on earth would the member opposite not

agree with legislation and programs that would support that kind of success?

Mr. Marchese: I do not understand why you have not fixed your foul, flawed funding formula that you promised to fix. Ontario schools used to have industrial arts programs, but today they're gone, thanks to your funding formula. Ontario schools used to have hands-on technical programs, but they're vanishing, thanks to your funding formula. Ontario schools used to have youth workers—no longer. Your solution is to dump kids at risk in equivalent-to-learning programs with no guarantees that they'll be taught by teachers, with no guarantees that they won't be gouged by new fees, with no guarantees that they will get an effective education.

You can't fix this bill—or maybe you can—but you can fix the funding formula. Why won't you fix this foul, flawed Conservative funding formula you promised to fix?

Hon. Ms. Wynne: It seems to me that the member opposite's question was written before the OSSTF press conference this morning, because the teachers' federations have been working with us solidly for two weeks to come up with amendments that would guarantee that some of the issues that he's raising would no longer be issues. So the answer to the question is that we have put guarantees in our amendments, if they are passed at clause-by-clause today, that would guarantee that credits will only be issued by high schools, that the ministry will have oversight of all the organizations, of all the equivalent learning environments that our students will be in, that the standards will be of the highest quality.

The funding formula discussion is one that is ongoing. What this bill is about is getting more kids to graduate, getting them into the programs that they need, so they can have the future that they deserve in this province.

IMMIGRANTS

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): My question today is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. The federal government tabled its 2006 annual report to Parliament on immigration this week. The report indicated that the federal government has increased its annual immigration target and aims to accept between 240,000 and 265,000 newcomers next year. The federal Minister of Citizenship and Immigration also acknowledges that Canada's current immigration system is flawed and there is a backlog of 800,000 applicants.

Minister, I understand that Ontario—and we've talked about this before—has welcomed more than 140,000 newcomers in one year, in 2005; that is, 54% of the overall newcomers coming into Canada have come into Ontario. I have to ask: How is this impacting Ontario, with this huge increase in numbers across the country?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I'd like to thank the member for Stoney Creek for the question. This is a very significant announcement that was made yesterday. We are now told

that over 265,000 immigrants will be coming to Canada next year. Over half of them will be coming to this province. So we have a huge stake in this decision made yesterday. What we're really saying clearly to the federal government is, "You can have all the targets you want, but you have to live up to your promise to flow the \$920 million that's supposed to be invested in settlement programs, language programs and training programs in Ontario." We welcome the newcomers, but we're still waiting for that money that was promised over a year ago to ensure the success of these newcomers.

Ms. Mossop: Ontario, as we've already talked about, attracts an overwhelming number of the newcomers to Canada. Many come here with global experiences, skills and professional degrees. In the Hamilton area alone, the area that I represent, 18,000 newcomers came between 2003 and 2005.

I understand that this government has introduced first-ever legislation to break down barriers facing internationally trained individuals. We've done a tremendous amount of work in that area. The legislation, if passed, would require 34 regulated professions in Ontario to ensure that their admissions are fair, transparent and clear. Also, we are following through on our commitment by being the first government in Canada to legislate a fair registration practice code for Ontario's regulated professions.

I have to ask you—because if we don't see the federal government coming to the table, we don't see them honouring their commitment: Will we be able to continue to work and do what we need to do for the newcomers coming to our province?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Just to, again, be very firm, Ontario and the people of Ontario have been at the table helping newcomers. We spent \$34 million on bridging and accreditation programs for professionals—\$34 million. We spent \$53 million on language training for adults, and we spend \$40 million a year making sure foreign-trained doctors are accredited.

We also introduced the first legislation of its kind to ensure that all regulatory bodies come under the auspices of the provincial government to ensure fair access for all qualified people. We are taking on the task; we are putting our money where our mouth is. We've got the toughest legislation in this country. We're saying to the federal government, "Come to the table and stop just making target announcements. Put your money where your mouth is. Show us the money."

1540

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): My question is to the Minister of Health. I have a letter here from Mary Jane Fisher from the Hamilton area. She was injured in January 2005 and finally diagnosed 15 months ago. She was told in January of this year that her spinal surgery would likely be scheduled in June. Today, Ms. Fisher is still waiting for a surgery date. She can no long-

er work and she is in constant, severe pain. She writes, "Although we are told that 'wait times' are shortening, obviously [this is] not [the case] for spinal/neck surgery."

Minister, what can you do to help Ms. Fisher and others who don't fall into one of the government's five priorities?

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I believe that in one sense Ms. Fisher may have already fallen into one of our five priorities, and that is a reflection on the fact that CT scans and MRIs, a diagnostic tool, have broad application across a wide variety of disease patterns and other things that may lead to surgery. In addition, each and every year since we've come to office, our government has invested more resources in hospitals, which have purchased an increase in service—that is, greater access to service—even beyond those specialized areas in the wait time strategy. The third piece is that, in Ontario, we will soon have the capacity to measure all of our surgical procedures. That's through our investment in the wait time information system. These are all investments that were made necessary because previous governments hadn't tackled them.

I take the particular case under advisement, but I can inform the honourable member that direct enhancement in services has resulted in a higher quality and quantity of services being provided. Of course, there is greater work yet to be done.

Mrs. Witmer: I'd like to remind the Minister of Health that the reason there was an ability to move forward at all is because we constructed the additional cardiac centres and cancer centres, and we introduced more MRIs and CAT scans.

But I'd like to get back to Ms. Fisher. She truly would do whatever it takes to get surgery. Your website tells her to talk to her physician—well, she's done that—and to her neurologist. She's willing to go anywhere for the surgery, but she still waits. If she were to call the website, it would also tell her that spinal/neck surgery isn't one of the Liberal government's priorities.

I'd say to you, Minister: You've spent millions advertising your wait time website, you've told the public wait times are down; however, Ms. Fisher is still waiting, almost two years later. How much longer must she live with this severe pain before her surgery is even scheduled?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: It is an excellent question on the part of the honourable member because it quite appropriately reminds us all, as I'm doing all the time, that there's more work to do in health care. But what the honourable member doesn't help us too much with is to describe how those circumstances are going to be aided and abetted when her party proposes to cut \$2.5 billion out of health care. That's not going to advance the circumstances for the individual patient who's been raised in the Legislature here today.

We're making the appropriate investments in a wait time information system that gives us the capacity to measure the waits for all of those patients who are out

there, to register them and to prioritize them. This has been a substantial investment in both time and energy that has been made necessary because previous governments didn't make those investments.

I recognize, of course, that across the breadth of health care, there are many areas where further improvement is necessary. We agree. That's why we refer to the phrase "continuous quality improvement," recognizing that we've brought significant wait time improvement in a variety of areas and there is but more work to be done. That's why we will stay the course and continue to make the investments that are necessary.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): New question.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Minister of Health. Your demand to hospitals to balance their budgets is having a serious impact at Bluewater Health in Sarnia. To respond to your demand, the hospital is proposing to close its outpatient chiropody clinic by March 2007. This clinic provides preventive treatment to diabetics at high risk for serious foot problems like ulcers, infections and gangrene which could lead to amputations.

Frank and Isobel Potts and Beryl Tunks are here today. Frank uses the clinic twice a month. He is one of 1,300 diabetics who accessed the clinic over the last year. If this clinic is closed, Frank and many others will go without preventive care because they can't afford to pay privately for foot services in the community.

Minister, it's your demand to balance budgets that's forcing Bluewater to close this clinic. What are you going to do about it?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: We know that, despite five years in government in the province of Ontario, this party continues to pretend that it's not necessary to ask people to operate within an allocation on an annualized basis. Bluewater in Sarnia is an example of a hospital, like every other one in the province of Ontario, that has seen an increase in its operating resources.

With respect specifically to the circumstances related to the outpatient foot clinic, there are services that are available in the community through VON, which is providing services both in Sarnia and in Petrolia. Patients were given a very long lead time, and it's my best understanding that the very same service providers will be operating in the community.

I will take under advisement the particular circumstances that the honourable member raises, but to the very best of my knowledge, we'll work hard to make sure these services are available for people in the community.

Ms. Martel: The reality is that, if this outpatient clinic does not operate at Bluewater, people like Frank and others are going to have to pay privately for foot services in the community, whether it be from VON or somebody else, and they can't afford to do that.

They're not the only ones who are concerned about this matter. On October 20, Sarnia city council passed a motion opposing this closure and requested a meeting with you. Petrolia town council, Inniskillin town council,

Plympton-Wyoming and Lambton county council are all opposing this closure as well.

It's ironic that in November, Diabetes Awareness Month, Frank, Isobel and Beryl have to come to Queen's Park to try and save this clinic.

Minister, you've told hospitals to balance their budgets. Here's an example of the consequences. I ask you again, what are you going to do to keep this publicly funded clinic open?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I know that the honourable member, on a daily basis, expresses a bias towards the provision of services inside a hospital. The point is, as was made in my earlier answer, that there are opportunities from time to time where services can be appropriately deployed and provided at the community level. This is one such case. I think that it makes a tremendous bit of sense.

I want to say to the honourable member, as I did in my earlier answer, that there are circumstances in Sarnia where we've given, this year, almost \$3 million in additional support for Bluewater hospital. We asked the hospital board, which is governed locally, to prioritize those services. In this case, I believe that because there are services available at the community level, they have decided to move forward with this alteration.

I want to remind members that all hospitals in the province of Ontario this year received more resources than last year, and they already know that they will in each of the next three years.

INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): My question is to the Minister of Finance. The previous government had a habit of making cuts to spending without much thought as to how their policies would affect municipalities. The results were down-loaded services. Important issues, ranging from infrastructure repair needs to provincial loans, were neglected. In the end, these policies proved detrimental to our communities. The McGuinty government has shown that it sees things differently. It believes in working with municipalities to ensure delivery of quality services to people that all levels of government are supposed to serve: the people of Ontario.

Minister, the majority of people of this province don't differentiate between a provincial tax and a municipal tax. What matters to them is that the money they give to the government goes into providing the services they need. Can you comment on how this government is working with municipalities to ensure that the people of Ontario are receiving the best bang for their buck?

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I want to say to my friend from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh that I don't know if it's the work he's doing or the work that I'm doing, and certainly we're not going to take credit for it, but there's something magical happening in his community.

There are a number of municipalities, and I don't have time to speak about all of them, so just let me say a word about Cornwall, which we all know has been hit with some bad economic news over the course of the past five years. I invite people to visit Cornwall if they want to see for themselves some real, vital new growth in that community. I was there during the summer. Wonderful things are happening.

I might mention the \$2 million that is going to Cornwall under the Move Ontario initiative; almost \$400,000 to help in land ambulance; some \$5 million to help with the reconstruction of Brookdale Avenue, right in the centre of town; and \$1.2 million to assist with water purification plants. All of these things are matters that my friend has talked about, and I'm proud that we're doing them in his home community.

Mr. Brownell: This government is the first in more than a decade to demonstrate an understanding of the pressures facing municipalities, in particular those pressures that resulted from the "you deal with it" policy of the last government. By creating a collaborative working partnership with the communities of Ontario, we are ensuring results for those who matter: our constituents.

1550

This has been the case in my riding, particularly in the city of Cornwall. By taking the bold step of forgiving the city's downtown loan, the McGuinty government has shown its commitment to help Cornwall in its time of economic transition. The loan was one issue I have raised ever since being elected. Another issue is the payment in lieu of taxes the city receives in regard to the Saunders hydro generating station.

Cornwall feels it deserves more, and I agree with them. Minister, can you tell us whether the government will review this arrangement and see how best we can serve the people of Cornwall?

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: Can I just say a word about the forgiveness of the downtown revitalization loan? In the scope of Ontario's budget, it wasn't a large, large amount of money—I think, if I check my notes, some \$3.6 million—but it had a tremendous impact on the community. It's one of those things that I point to when I talk about how some really magical things are happening in the community of Cornwall, the city of Cornwall and environs.

Can I say one word before we finish, about the assessment of the Saunders dam? My friend from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh has made eloquent arguments on the topic, and certainly those arguments will have an impact on public policy.

VISITORS

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: It's not to speak to the answer; it's to welcome to the Legislature this afternoon my niece Brittney Gellately and her roommate, Sasha Mallya, from Ryerson University. They're in their first year. They're here at the Legislature to see how we operate. I certainly welcome them.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: For the record, yesterday in debate I informed the House that the Ontario Liberal Party had paid James Carville C\$65,000 for his 18-minute presentation at their convention. I, unfortunately, misspoke; it should be C\$56,000.

VISITORS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I just want to welcome to the House some members of the West End Angels in Parkdale–High Park, a wonderful drop-in, dinner and counselling program that has been running for about eight years: Pollie, Linda, and Gurjung Singh.

PETITIONS

GO TRANSIT TUNNEL

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I keep getting petitions signed by a number of people in regard to the dilapidated bridge on Old Weston Road and Keele Street. It's to the Parliament of Ontario, the minister of infrastructure services and the Minister of Transportation. It reads as follows:

"Whereas GO Transit is presently planning to tunnel an area just south of St. Clair Avenue West and west of Old Weston Road, making it easier for GO trains to pass a major rail crossing;

"Whereas TTC is presently planning a TTC right-of-way along all of St. Clair Avenue West, including the bottleneck caused by the dilapidated St. Clair Avenue–Old Weston Road bridge;

"Whereas this bridge (underpass) will be: (1) too narrow for the planned TTC right-of-way, since it will leave only one lane for traffic; (2) it is not safe for pedestrians (it's about 50 metres long). It's dark and slopes on both east and west sides, creating high banks for 300 metres; and (3) it creates a divide, a no man's land, between Old Weston Road and Keele Street."

Interjection: People are enraged.

Mr. Ruprecht: People are enraged; this is true. "(This was acceptable when the area consisted entirely of slaughterhouses, but now the area has 900 new homes);

"Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that GO Transit extend the tunnel beyond St. Clair Avenue West so that trains will pass under St. Clair Avenue West, thus eliminating this eyesore of a bridge with its high banks and blank walls. Instead it will create a dynamic, revitalized community enhanced by a beautiful continuous cityscape with easy traffic flow."

Since I agree with this petition, I'm delighted to affix my name to it.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I have a petition that was delivered to me by Eden Orr and her father, Michael Orr, and it relates to the issue of discrimination in the province of Ontario relating to the funding of faith-based schools. I will read it into the record.

"Whereas the Ontario government already ... funds 93% of faith-based schools in Ontario, but the remaining 7% receive no funding, solely because they are not Catholic;

"Whereas the United Nations Human Rights Committee ruled in 1999 and again in 2005 that this arrangement is discriminatory and violates basic international human rights law that Ontario formally agreed to uphold;

"Whereas all three parties represented in the Legislature support Catholic separate school funding, as guaranteed by the Constitution of Canada, so that the only fair and viable solution to the discrimination is to extend funding to the small religious minorities that are currently excluded;

"Whereas the Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that Ontario has the constitutional power to provide funding to non-Catholic faith-based schools;

"Whereas Ontario is the only western democracy that fully funds faith-based schools of one religion to the total exclusion of all other religions, while all other provinces except the Atlantic provinces fund faith-based schools and have thriving public school systems;

"Whereas the cultural survival of the affected minority groups is at stake;

"Whereas faith-based schools produce responsible and productive citizens; and

"Whereas the Multi-Faith Coalition for Equal Funding of Religious Schools in December 2004 submitted to the Minister of Education a detailed proposal for the funding of non-Catholic faith-based schools in a manner that is fair and accountable and protects and enhances the public interest;

"We call on the Ontario Legislature to pass legislation to provide equitable funding in respect of all faith-based schools in Ontario without religious discrimination and without any reduction in funding for public education, with accountability requirements and standards in place to ensure that the public interest is safeguarded."

I am pleased to affix my signature in support of this petition.

VISITORS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to introduce in the east gallery Wesley Reid of Darwin, Australia. He's here with Dan Bowman of St. Catharines, a lacrosse and hockey star, and Dan Gorman of St. Catharines, a baseball and hockey star. We welcome Wesley Reid from Darwin, Australia.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I want to introduce Mr. Charles Bannis. He was the assistant secretary to the Minister of Finance for the island of Dominica and is now here in Scarborough. I want to welcome him here. I don't know why he's not in the sunny island of Dominica but is instead living here in Scarborough Southwest.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): It's always a pleasure to rise pursuant to standing order 55. I'd like to rise to give the Legislature the business of the House, not for next week but for the week of November 14, seeing as next week is constituency week and remembrance week.

On Tuesday, November 14, in the afternoon, second reading of Bill 155, Electoral System Referendum Act; in the evening, second reading of Bill 151, Budget Measures Act.

On Wednesday, November 15, in the afternoon, to be confirmed; in the evening, second reading of Bill 152, Ministry of Government Services Consumer Protection and Service Modernization Act.

On Thursday, November 16, in the afternoon, second reading of Bill 69, Regulatory Modernization Act.

I'll ask the page to hand this off to the table.

1600

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MINISTRY OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES CONSUMER PROTECTION AND SERVICE MODERNIZATION ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006

DU MINISTÈRE DES SERVICES GOUVERNEMENTAUX SUR LA MODERNISATION DES SERVICES ET DE LA PROTECTION DU CONSOMMATEUR

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 30, 2006, on the motion for second reading of Bill 152, An Act to modernize various Acts administered by or affecting the Ministry of Government Services / Projet de loi 152, Loi visant à moderniser diverses lois qui relèvent du ministère des Services gouvernementaux ou qui le touchent.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): First of all, I wanted to say something about the form of Bill 152, and then I was going to speak about the actual content of it.

This is a bill with almost 200 pages. It covers eight different acts, many of them of some complexity. I consider it somewhat problematic that we have to deal with eight different bills in the space of time that it would normally take to deal with one. Every single one of these bills really has attached to it some problems and some pluses, and needs some attention. That's my first comment.

Having said that, I wanted to just walk through the eight different bills that are part of this omnibus, and the problems and pluses of some of them.

Land titles: I want to deal with that in some detail, so I'm going to leave that one.

Gift cards: I remember that our honourable member, Mr. Kormos, brought in a similar bill around gift cards quite a while ago. Certainly I have no problem with that. It's an atrocity that these cards have an expiry date; they shouldn't. That's very simple.

Just a few moments on the liquor act: It proposes changes to allow bars and restaurants to expand their licence to allow patrons to carry drinks with them to separate areas of an establishment, such as a washroom. This allows consumers to monitor their drinks and reduces the likelihood of an unknown substance, such as date rape drugs, to be put in their drinks.

I consider this very strange. First of all, it puts the onus for protecting oneself on the victim. The onus is put on the victim to protect, let's say, her drink by carrying it into the washroom, which seems strange and unsanitary in and of itself, rather than on the law. This is clearly a crime. It is a crime to drug another human being. Why don't we see some effort put into preventing the crime rather than dealing with the victim of the potential crime?

What would one want to see here? I think one would certainly want to see more inspectors. One would want to see some educational programs, perhaps directed at young men rather than at young women and what they do with their drinks. Clearly this is a huge issue dealt with in a very simplistic fashion, as if being able to carry a drink into a washroom is really going to address the problem of date rape. This is absurd. This is like addressing the problem of assault by just putting in brighter lights on streets. We need a law answer to this. We need an answer to the crime committed here, not a directed, simplistic bill aimed at the victim.

Another part of the liquor act would allow bingo halls to sell alcohol. Certainly in my riding of Parkdale–High Park and in other ridings I've been part of, the major users of bingo halls are generally the poorest members of our community. They tend to be seniors, by and large. They tend to be people whose means are limited, by and large. Quite frankly, in all my years of being involved in ridings, both as a clergyperson and now as a politician, I've never had any of them ask why they can't have a drink while they play bingo. So this seems very bizarre. This seems, again, like something brought in because, in this case, people want to sell alcohol; I can understand that. It certainly isn't being brought in because of the consumers, the people who actually use the bingo halls.

I think we would want to be a little reticent about extending alcohol into an arena where it's only going to add to the amount of gambling going on for those people in our communities who can least afford to lose money. This could take a whole section of debate, and a committee is needed to look at this part of the act alone. Basically, what I'm going to say throughout is that this bill should go to committee.

The bill deals with the electricity act, funeral homes, identity theft and business law modernization. What I'd like to zero in on are two sections of this bill, because really that's all I have time for: One of them is the funeral homes section, and the other is the land titles section, which I think all of us should be very concerned that it be addressed.

First of all, I know that all the honourable members here probably have funeral homes in their ridings. I hope that they've had a chance to meet the funeral directors in their ridings. If they have, they'll have discovered, as I have, that these are incredible people; they're people who really do serve the community. They provide a service that isn't easily substitutable. I know that for many, many years I've had the honour and privilege of working with a couple of those funeral homes as a clergyperson—Turner and Porter and Cardinal Funeral Homes in Toronto—and I've never met with anything less than true professionalism. I believe they actually do work for their clients, that they do the best for those who come to them. It was a proud part of my past. They, one should know, are vehemently opposed to this section in Bill 152, and I wanted to walk through why that is.

I'm going to quote first of all from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. This is a letter that they sent to Rob Dowler on October 13, assistant deputy minister, Ministry of Government Services. This was from the body of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, not from the funeral directors themselves, but I will go into that. The woman writing is Judith Andrew, the vice-president of the Ontario branch of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. She writes:

"Regrettably, it has come to our attention that the principle of fair competition may be compromised in rules being considered for the treatment of municipal and religious cemeteries. As these entities are property tax-exempt, the issue of unfair competition arises if these so-called non-commercial cemeteries decide to engage in commercial enterprise, as they often do by selling monuments, or offering a form of funeral in their on-site visitation centres.

"The idea of requiring non-commercial cemeteries to make payments in lieu ... of property taxes would appear to be a wonderful strategy to level the playing field. A PIL strategy actually offers a double 'win' opportunity; PIL monies gathered in a central fund could also help small and abandoned cemeteries address their deficient care and maintenance funds, assuming the PIL-paying cemetery's own care and maintenance fund was sufficient.

"We understand that there has been some opposition to the idea of a central fund from the Association of

Municipalities of Ontario. It seems the municipalities would prefer to retain the PILs for use in upgrading the facilities at their own cemeteries, which would hardly be fair to the other businesses in the bereavement field. By the same rationale"—and this is the critical sentence—"a business should be able to argue that it be permitted to retain its own property taxes for reinvestment in capital facilities on site."

It goes on to say that the Canadian Federation of Independent Business "is an advocate for independent business in Ontario, and will not support legislation enshrining a competitive advantage for one group above another. The CFIB cannot support the policy that has been proposed regarding the unequal levying of property tax in the bereavement sector." That's from our friends in the Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

Now to those people who are involved in Open Dialogue, which is a group of funeral directors. Again, they write to Mr. Dowler, assistant deputy minister. This was sent on October 10. I quote from a letter sent about their concerns about this part of the legislation, Bill 152. Here I'm quoting from Kate McMaster, the executive director of Open Dialogue. She says:

"While we appreciate that the ministry is making significant progress toward proclamation of the act, Open Dialogue will not support a statute and regulation that will place our members at a competitive disadvantage. The BSAC goal of fostering 'an environment that will facilitate new business ventures' will not be realized by assessing new cremation facilities for property taxation while allowing existing crematoriums to enjoy a property tax/payment-in-lieu exemption. This creates, rather than eradicates, an unlevel playing field in the bereavement marketplace.

"Our discussion of funeral homes situated on cemeteries having an opportunity to skirt property tax assessment was most disturbing. On-site funeral homes will have the opportunity to make this space multi-purpose should they choose to line the interior of the funeral home with cremation niches and/or mausoleum crypts. This opportunity will not be available to existing funeral homes, established in compliance with the Funeral Directors and Establishments Act, who are situated on commercially zoned property.

1610

"Further, an on-site, multi-purpose funeral home/columbarium/mausoleum would have a strong case when petitioning MPAC for a property tax assessment exemption. A funeral home that houses human remains could argue that the 'predominant use' of the facility is that of a cemetery. Funeral rites and ceremonies might be conducted in that building for 12 hours per day, seven days per week; however, the human remains are housed in that facility 24 hours per day, seven days per week, in perpetuity. It strikes me that, based on the predominant use argument, MPAC would be likely to declare this facility a cemetery. Again, funeral establishments located in residential neighbourhoods are unlikely to have the ability to rezone their commercial properties to become a cemetery.

"Buildings that house human remains are property tax-exempt. Buildings that house human remains are able to access the cemetery care and maintenance fund to pay for upkeep in perpetuity. The fact remains that bereavement sector stakeholders have entered into these consultations in order to correct the statutory loopholes and regulatory gaps that exist in the current legislative framework. Permitting funeral homes to be situated on cemeteries without anticipating and addressing these, and other, unintended consequences will once again place existing, compliant, off-site funeral homes at a competitive disadvantage the minute 'the ink is dry' on the new act and regulation."

There are other problems with this bill as regard to funeral homes and cemeteries. For one thing, it broadens the definition of who could be a funeral director. One of the great fears of Open Dialogue—this is the association of funeral directors, and it addresses this. They say:

"It has been proposed that a sales representative licence be established for the purpose of selling funeral goods and services to the public. This new licence undermines the traditional role of funeral director as unbiased counsellor, educator and adviser in all matters relating to the disposition and funeralization process. In our opinion"—again, a critical sentence—"contracts for funeral goods and services should be prepared, negotiated and signed by a salaried, trained funeral director, not a commissioned" salesperson.

I speak to the members of the House: Can you imagine a commissioned salesperson dealing with somebody who is traumatized at the time of their loved one's death? Can you imagine a commissioned salesperson dealing with a senior at the time of their spouse's death—also traumatized? Do we really want to allow this? Clearly, funeral directors in our communities say, "No. We don't want commissioned salespeople selling funeral goods, funeral services to anyone." We want funeral directors to be trained, to be salaried and to be working not at cross-purposes with the people they serve, not for money only, but in the best interests of the clients they serve. So again, a possible problem with this section.

They go on to remind us: "We support the ministry's proposal to levy property taxes on land in commercial cemeteries being used to offer and deliver non-interment supplies and services. We cannot support non-commercial cemeteries (as currently defined) offering non-interment supplies and services paying a contribution comparable to property tax into their care and maintenance funds."

So, really, what they're asking for is a level playing field. This section in the bill creates an unlevel playing field. It gives cemeteries a distinct advantage, the way the bill is structured, over existing funeral homes. I think all of the honourable members here probably have a funeral home and some cemeteries in their jurisdictions, and one would want to be very cognizant of that and very sensitive to that—another aspect of this bill that really needs to be looked at in some depth and in committee.

I have a few minutes left, so I wanted to walk this House through some of the problems with the title fraud

bill section in this act as well. I can't think of a better way of doing it than quoting from the *Toronto Star* on Tuesday, October 31. Bob Aaron, who is a lawyer, I gather, talks about what the problems are with the way this bill is constructed. He goes through a situation, and I'll just walk through it because it's complicated. That's the problem: We're dealing with some complex issues here, and they're dealt with in this bill in some fairly simplistic ways. He says:

"Tony is a tenant in a house owned by Owen Owner—an absentee landlord. Tony Tenant obtains a fake Ontario driver's licence and social insurance card in Owen Owner's name from the same source that my dog Benjy used to obtain his own Ontario driver's licence.

"Tony calls his local real estate agent, and lists the house for sale.

"No sign is placed on the front lawn at Tony's request.

"The agent shows a number of buyers through 'Tony's' house and eventually Peter Purchaser agrees in writing to buy the house from Tony Tenant, who is masquerading as Owen Owner.

"Peter Purchaser has a good job and excellent credit, and easily gets a mortgage for 75% of the \$300,000 purchase price from the bank.

"Peter and Tony (alias Owen Owner) retain lawyers for the transaction.

"Both lawyers practise only real estate law and are familiar with the antics of title fraudsters.

"On closing, both lawyers check their client's ID cards and find nothing amiss.

"Tony's ID, of course, is a high quality fake. The deal closes after the bill becomes effective.

"The two lawyers have unknowingly participated in the registration of a fraudulent deed.

"Shortly after closing, the real Owen Owner returns to Toronto and finds Peter Purchaser living in the home, claiming he owns it. Peter has spent \$75,000 on a down payment and \$50,000 in renovations.

"This scenario is not far-fetched. It has actually happened.

"Under Bill 152, the deed to Peter Purchaser is cancelled and the real Owen Owner gets his title back. So far so good—for Owen Owner.

"Peter Purchaser, of course, is in trouble. He, too, is an innocent victim of the scam.

"Willingly or not, Peter moves out and applies for compensation to the land titles assurance fund.

"Judging from its past practice, it could take the fund two or three years and tens of thousands of dollars in legal fees to get his down payment back.

"He may well have to absorb the legal fees he spends in the process, along with his renovation costs.

"Meantime, Tony, the fraudster, disappears. Peter Purchaser, having lost the house, stops paying the mortgage.

"Owen Owner moves back into the house.

"He reads Bill 152 and finds out to his horror that even though he owns the house again, the mortgage that

Peter Purchaser gave to the bank is valid even though the deed to Peter was forged.

"Owen can't understand what good it is to get his house back if the mortgage on it—which he didn't sign—is valid. Of course, he refuses to make payments on it.

"It isn't long before the bank delivers an eviction order to Owen, claiming that its valid mortgage is in arrears. Owen then receives a notice that the bank is selling the house under its 'power of sale' in the mortgage.

"Peter Purchaser is also in trouble with the bank"—again, another innocent victim. "Since he signed the mortgage promising to repay \$225,000 plus interest, and since he understandably stopped making payments, the bank also sues Peter Purchaser for repayment—even though he no longer owns the house.

"The bank is not interested in waiting for Peter or the assurance fund to pay out its mortgage, so it evicts Owen Owner"—the original owner, remember?—"and sells the house.

"The bank is afraid it won't qualify for compensation because Bill 152 says it had to demonstrate 'due diligence' with respect to its mortgage, and in fact it took Peter Purchaser's application over the Internet and never met him.

"Now Owen Owner—who had his title stolen and then restored—goes to the fund to get compensation for losing his house a second time—once to the innocent purchaser who was himself a victim of Tony, and a second time to the bank.

"But it gets even worse, and the net spreads even wider. Owen and Peter are not the only victims of the fraudster.

"Two lawyers were involved in the transaction between Tony, alias Owen Owner the seller, and Peter Purchaser, the buyer.

"Both are licensed to access the Teranet land registration system which includes the government's database for searching titles and registering deeds and mortgages.

"Although they are innocent of any wrongdoing and both checked their client's identity cards, they both unwittingly participated in the registration of the fraudulent deed.

"Bill 152 allows the director of land registration to suspend immediately the Teranet access rights of any lawyer who has submitted an 'unauthorized' document.

"Despite the fact that both lawyers carry mandatory liability insurance and are governed by the law society's strict rules ... under Bill 152 they can be immediately suspended from using the Teranet system without notice."

I'll stop there. But clearly there are problems with the sections of this bill that try to address land fraud. We know this is a major, serious problem in our communities as well.

1620

Again, I stop where I started. Here is an omnibus bill that has way too much in it to be discussed with any legitimacy in the time allotted. It needs to go to committee. There are lots of problems in it. I've highlighted a

couple of them, one under the bereavement act portion and one under the Land Titles Act, not to mention the other strange aspects of the bill like the drugged drinks and licensed bingo halls aspects. So there are problems with this bill. I certainly wouldn't be prepared to support it, but I would be prepared to send it to committee.

The Acting Speaker: It's time for questions and comments.

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): I'm pleased to respond to the comments from the member from Parkdale-High Park, specifically concerning the bereavement section of the bill. In fact, I think we need to look at what is in place now or at least what has happened.

Historically, there was a bereavement sector advisory committee, called BSAC, and the member referred to this. There were a number of competing interests in the bereavement sector. All the competing interests came together and reached consensus on a set of recommendations. Now, it is true that none of them are wholeheartedly happy with those recommendations. This happens in negotiations between competing interests: Not everyone is always happy. But Bill 152, which is before us, in fact reflects the compromise agreement arrived at by BSAC members. So what we have before us is the compromise.

Let me just point out that with regard to the whole issue of what happens when a cemetery sort of wanders into the territory of providing funeral services, at the moment, if that happens, there is no property taxation because it is a cemetery. Under Bill 152, what will happen is that if it is a commercial cemetery, it will in fact be obliged to pay property tax on that part of the enterprise which is deemed to be a funeral home, a casket sales office or a monument sales office, as the case may be. If it's a non-profit cemetery, it will instead pay into what is known as the care and maintenance fund. But it is important to understand that the money is locked into the care and maintenance fund and can only be used for purposes around the care and maintenance of gravesites, which are very specifically laid out in legislation.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): Just a quick comment on the very extensive presentation made by the member from Parkdale-High Park relating to the bereavement section of the bill: I think it was very important because as I reviewed the bill, I didn't get nearly all the problems that have been pointed out and that exist. I have had the opportunity to meet with a number of the funeral directors in my riding, and they weren't talking about the things that they wanted changed in the present act. What they were talking about was making sure that the bill that was coming forward wouldn't make it more difficult and less competitive for them to work within the community.

I was also very concerned about the comments made by the government side. They said, "Well, this isn't really what the government believes in. This is the compromise position of the people we were talking to, what they wanted done, so we're doing it. We're not really sure that we agree with what's there. This is the compromise of the industry." I keep hearing that from the government in pieces of legislation. The other day I was

in committee and the minister said, "Well, I don't necessarily agree with that part of the bill. It's just there for discussion. And if enough people come forward to object to that part of the bill, then I'll change it." That's not the way government is supposed to introduce legislation. We're supposed to have legislation they believe in and think will solve the problems that have been brought forward, and we debate it to see if it can be improved upon. But it seems that that's not the way the government does it.

So I really appreciate the fact that these things were pointed out. If that's the way this government does business, I hope that it will go to committee and that these changes will be made, so my funeral directors will be able to conduct business in the fashion they've been doing it in. They've been very good citizens in my community, looking after people in bereavement situations, where they need someone who understands and can deal with their situation rather than someone who's there, as was mentioned, as a commissioned salesman to see how much they can sell and how fast they can sell it.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I rise to commend my colleague the member from Parkdale-High Park. She has been here but a couple of weeks, and I had to say when the door opened and she came in and immediately took her seat, you recognized her right off.

She gave a sparkling little speech of some 20 minutes and she touched on an aspect of the bill that I have not yet really heard anyone talk about, that is, the bereavement industry, the funeral directors, how this act is going to impact upon that particular enterprise. I've had an opportunity to hear many speeches around this, sitting in the chair, and quite frankly, this is a new element that she has added to the agenda. She is correct in noting that there is some angst in that particular community, that economic community, in terms of the bill.

I do not accept what has been suggested by the member for Guelph-Wellington that this is part of a compromise of Conservative-led people who have been brought together. The bill has to reflect what is best not just for the industry, of course, but what is best for all Ontarians. The member from Parkdale-High Park has pointed out some of the inadequacies as seen by those who are closest to it.

I've heard the minister and others in the government say that this will come before committee, and I would suspect that there will be a lively debate if this is brought before committee and if the members of the bereavement community have an opportunity to come forward and point out what is good and what is bad in the bill. If her speech is any indication, there are many people who are seeking very large changes. I've heard the minister say that he is willing to consider changes on many aspects, and I would hope that he is willing to consider them in this area as well. It is, as I said, a large industry in Ontario. They have not been properly consulted; the committee will be the time to do so.

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): It was probably about three or four weeks ago that my father gave me a call, which is very rare—he is never the one

usually doing the phone calling—and told me that a friend of his by the name of Keith had called him up concerned about the mortgage fraud issue. So I want to read something into the record to give both Keith and my father some assurances as to what's in this bill: "Amendments to the Land Titles Act that will ensure that all property owners, including homeowners, cannot lose their property because of a falsified mortgage, fraudulent sale or a counterfeit power of attorney. While the incidence of fraud is low, any level of fraud is unacceptable to this government. With this legislation, we are taking steps to prevent incidents of real estate fraud and protect Ontario homeowners. We are committed to actively pursuing additional steps to combat real estate fraud." I hope that gives Keith and my father some reassurance in this area. I'm sure there are a number of people across the province who are welcoming these initiatives.

As well, I look at the consumer gift card issue and I think of a gift that my brother gave to me. I'm into family stories today. My brother gave me \$50 to the Black Dog Pub, which many people in Toronto would know is one of the finest pubs in the city. In fact, it's been voted many times as the best pub in the city. I forgot all about it, I tucked it away and it has now expired. I know it will be too late now for this legislation, but I'm hoping Ken Rueter of the Black Dog sees fit to honour it anyway.

But this is the kind of thing that happens to people. Sometimes they get these gift cards, tuck them away, forget about them, and I think it will be very good for all Ontarians to be able to have those cards honoured. I thank you for the time and I thank the minister for bringing this legislation forward.

The Acting Speaker: For response, the Chair recognizes the member for Parkdale-High Park.

Ms. DiNovo: Thank you to the honourable members for their comments, some of which didn't seem to have a great deal to do with what I said, but that's okay. In response to those comments that did have to do with what I said, I heard that this was a compromise position, this part of Bill 152 that deals with bereavement, but clearly it's not. It's not acceptable, certainly not to the people at Open Dialogue, the funeral directors' community. It's clearly not acceptable to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. These are formidable bodies. So one would hope that they would be taken into account. In a sense, as we heard, I hope, it's really a way of non-profit cemeteries segueing into the funeral business with an unfair advantage. That's what they are talking about. It gives an unfair advantage to some players in this business over others. That's it.

1630

In terms of the Land Titles Act, I didn't get to finish what Bob Aaron, who's a Toronto real estate lawyer, had to say, but he does say:

"Bill 152 is the first baby step in addressing only one problem of title fraud, but it creates more problems than it fixes."

"We still have a long way to go, and I worry that the title fraud dilemma will get much worse before it gets any better."

"The bill ... does not establish any system to ensure that people with fraudulent intentions don't still go on the land registry system," which is the very intent of this part of this bill.

Again, when dealing with 200 pages of legislation—I'm not a lawyer—if someone who's not a lawyer can look at this, read this and pick apart some of the problems in it, I think there's no question that we want to send this to committee before it goes any further at all.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to a certain bill in his office.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Todd Decker): The following is the title of the bill to which His Honour did assent:

Bill 148, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act respecting the use of seat belts / Projet de loi 148, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne le port de la ceinture de sécurité.

MINISTRY OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES CONSUMER PROTECTION AND SERVICE MODERNIZATION ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 DU MINISTÈRE DES SERVICES GOUVERNEMENTAUX SUR LA MODERNISATION DES SERVICES ET DE LA PROTECTION DU CONSOMMATEUR

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Apparently, the government doesn't want to speak to this bill.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): We don't have to. We're satisfied.

Mr. Chudleigh: Yes, they're satisfied. They want to pass it.

There are 54 sections in this bill. As the previous speaker just pointed out, she spoke to two of them and I think she could have gone on at length for some time on either one of those two sections. We're limited to 20 minutes. It's really unconscionable that 54 sections be jammed into one bill and expect this House to do due diligence on each of those sections while having a very limited time before the House to speak to each of those sections. However, that is the nature of this government: "Deflect, delay, deny and see how much we can get away with in the meantime."

Today is an interesting day in the House. As you know, it is the last day before we have our constituency week break, when we will be involved in a lot of our

Remembrance Day services through the province. Many of the rural members will have four, five, 10 different services they might attend over the next week. It's always a very emotional time to stand before the cenotaph and remember those who have gone before. So going out on constituency week is the reason for the last day of the House today for the next 10 days or so.

It's also the last day for this set of pages. Pages generally come into the House for about six weeks at a time. Your period was six weeks? About six weeks at a time. Sometimes it's a little shorter because of holidays or whatnot, the end of the House or those kinds of things. But this has been an excellent group of pages. It's fun to sit here and watch the pages as they first come in. They're kind of looking around, getting used to their new surroundings, feeling their way. They've been instructed as to what to do and they do their job well, but there are always things that come up that aren't quite what they expect. Then, gradually, you'll see that one or two pages, four or five perhaps, get a little confidence. They walk with a faster stride. They seem to have an aura of knowing where they're going and what they're doing. There are always two or three pages with a twinkle in their eye that might reflect a little bit of mischief, and those are the ones who perhaps are the most fun when they get to know their way around this House.

I've been known to encourage pages, to see if they can find their way to the attic, especially this time of year when Halloween is here, because there is a ghost that wanders the halls of Queen's Park and it's been here for many years. Before Queen's Park was built here, there was what was called in those days an insane asylum on this spot. And the rumours are that—this is a long way from the bill, I know, Speaker, but it's a reflection on Halloween—there was a person who was buried behind that insane asylum and their ghost still haunts the fourth floor, where my office is. A former member of the table was the last person I've met who saw and experienced the ghost as she—it was a female—walked down the hall in a white dress and walked right through him. Those are his words—a reputable gentleman who used to sit at this table and is now enjoying retirement.

This is the last day in the House of our Clerk, Claude DesRosiers. It's sad to see him go, because it's been a great opportunity for me to have met an individual of that quality and character in this place. As you come in as a young MPP—maybe not young, but as a new MPP—you look for someone to give you advice. And no matter what kinds of advice you asked for, whether it be to perhaps create some mischief in the House or disrupt the House, which of course the table would not think was the proper thing to do, regardless of what you wanted to do, you could always count on the table to give you the proper advice as to what was right and what was wrong and what the standing orders really meant when you were talking to them. I think those kinds of things flow from the top down. I think Claude had that effect on the people who work in that area as well.

So this is the last day on three fronts. It is also a day of debate on what is a huge omnibus bill. One of the things

that strikes me on this bill is that there are 54 sections and they deal with 47 different bills. When this government was in opposition and there were occasions when our government of the day did bring in omnibus bills, because from time to time government has some things to pass and we lump them all together, the government of this day used to rail against omnibus bills. They would scream from the rafters as to how unfortunate it was that democracy had sunk to such a low level in Ontario as to be able to bring in an omnibus bill of this nature. I think Bill 40 in our first term was such a bill that caused a great deal of concern for the members sitting over there who used to sit over here.

It's an insight into the government's thinking that here they have introduced their own omnibus bill—and this isn't the only omnibus bill that's before the House; there are one or two others before the House. It's being rushed forward for debate before the consumers and other groups that are affected by this bill, by the legislation, have even seen the bill or been able to read through or understand which parts affect them, much less being in a position to respond to this particular bill. It's sad that consumer groups and business groups that are going to be dramatically affected by this bill—as we heard from our last speaker, the funeral home business is going to be dramatically affected by this bill, yet they have not had time to fully understand the effect this bill is going to have on their businesses.

Omnibus bills seem to have been designed in order to minimize the ability to debate the subjects to any degree of substance, so that bills that come to the House in an omnibus fashion can quite often create future problems for the government in that they have passed a piece of legislation that they don't fully understand. I know that happened to us when we were in government. We would then have to pass another piece of legislation to fix the legislation we passed before or to fix some small clause of it.

1640

That is what can very easily happen when you don't have time to debate to any degree the various sections of this particular bill. This bill talks to some of the problems of real estate fraud, as the previous speaker spoke to. There is a bill before the House, a private member's bill in the name of Joe Tascona—who is sitting in the Speaker's chair at the moment—Bill 136, the Restore the Deed Act. It is a vastly superior piece of legislation in that it does protect many of the people whom this bill does not protect.

As we heard earlier, in Bill 152 the owner of a house who has been defrauded out of his house can still expect to own his house. However, he can also expect to have a new mortgage that he didn't want and that he did not get any benefit from, but he is responsible for that new mortgage. A new mortgage on a house in Toronto could easily be \$300,000 or \$400,000. Here he is owning the house that he owned before, probably mortgage-free or with a very low mortgage, and all of a sudden, he still owns his house, thanks to Bill 152, but he also has a

brand new debt of \$400,000, \$500,000, \$600,000—whatever the perpetrator of the fraud thinks they can get away with in financing this house.

So Bill 136 addresses this. Bill 152 does not address the fraud as it's perpetrated on the banks or mortgage companies. It doesn't protect the real estate agents, it does not protect the lawyers for the buyer, the lawyers for the seller or the lawyers for the person who owned the original house. I guess, in true fashion, Mr. Speaker, although I know you are a member of the Law Society of Upper Canada, there aren't too many people in Ontario who would have a great deal of sympathy for the plight of lawyers, but I think they deserve the same kind of protection that any other person in Ontario deserves.

Bill 136 does give some protection in that area; Bill 152, this omnibus bill that we're debating in front of the House today, does not. That's too bad, because there's a better piece of legislation around that this government should have a look at. Hopefully, when it goes out to committee and they have the opportunity to amend this bill, indeed they will be able to amend it and give the protections that are in Bill 136, Mr. Tascona's bill. Some of those protections can be incorporated into Bill 152 and therefore give some protection to people who own their homes and, through real estate fraud, may some day find themselves not owning that home or, if they do own that home, owning it with a huge new mortgage from which they had no benefit.

This omnibus bill is a cookie-cutter approach to resolving a lot of consumer issues that require public debate. Again, as I said earlier in my time here, this debate is so short that it's so very difficult to cover 54 different sections in a bill in a 20-minute time frame. If you did speak to the bill at second reading, and if you could speak to the bill at third reading, that might give you 40 minutes of speaking time, or perhaps 30 minutes if it was a 10-minute time frame; it still isn't enough time to cover more than two or three sections of this act. That's a shame, when you're bringing in laws that affect businesses in this country and the citizens of this province in very real and dramatic ways, to not have the time to discuss these bills properly to get it right. It's more important to get it right than it is to get it passed. The member for Oriole suggests that we're going to pass this bill, and we're going to pass it very quickly. It would be far more important to me to make sure that we've got the bill right, rather than get it passed.

The consumer issues: One thing the government could do is to break out all the consumer issues that are in this bill, and some of those consumer issues are very good. Some of them are needed—for instance, the gift cards, which, in the two-minute questions and comments, the member from Scarborough talked about. It has always been a bugaboo of mine that if you buy a gift card and you pay them your 50 bucks to get the gift card, that gift card should be good for as long as your 50 bucks is good. Your \$50 can sit in your wallet for many, many years; so should that gift card be able to sit in your wallet. Provided that the company the gift card is written on doesn't

go bankrupt, that card should be good. To have that card expire after you've paid your hard-earned money for it I think is wrong. This bill corrects that, and that's a wonderful section of this bill. But it's only one section of the 54 sections. There are another 53 of them that I have some problems with. The bill isn't completely bad. There's one good section in it, I should say. The possible amendments to this bill would include incorporating Bill 136, the Restore the Deed Act.

If I could make a few short comments on the real estate fraud issue, real estate fraud was addressed by one of the members in a two-minute question and comment period. Reading a statement into the record that this is going to protect your home doesn't make it so. Although the member may believe it makes it so, it doesn't. As pointed out by the previous speaker, although it protects his deed as such—he can still be the legal owner of the house after he pays his legal fees and after he goes through the legal gyrations that could cost him, with legal bills, another considerable sum—he's also going to have a new mortgage that he has no benefit from, as I've mentioned before. That's going to create a lot of adversity for a lot of people if these loopholes aren't covered up, aren't changed and made to be far more tough and stringent than they are in the current bill.

The unsafe electrical products portion of this bill: This government is focusing on enforcement after the accident, and parents and children will still be at risk. What we need is enforcement at the distributor level for products that are manufactured off-shore and shipped into this country, so that defective products don't get into the store and don't get into the consumer's hands. The CSA has done that for many, many years, and it has done an excellent job of it. I don't know why this unsafe electrical products section was put in here. Actually, it seems to weaken the current system, as opposed to strengthening it.

Enforcing something at the consumer level means that someone has to be injured, someone has to go through some injury or some discomfort in order for the product to be found to be less than sufficient, to be defective. I think that in Ontario that's wrong. That's not the way we've done things in the past. In the past, that has been done at the wholesale level, at the distribution level. Before you buy something, if you're a distributor, before you take on that product to distribute it, it's tested to see that it's safe. You take one apart to make sure that it's manufactured in a proper way. After that testing, if you're satisfied that it's going to be a good product, the Canadian Standards Association can put their seal of approval on it. It's a good way to protect consumers. The way they have this bill structured, it doesn't seem to be a step forward; it seems to be a step back to me.

1650

Finally, I'd like to make one comment on the Internet gaming prohibition on advertising. Again, this is a subject that is near and dear to the hearts of the Ontario horse-racing industry. They are losing huge amounts of money to offshore Internet gambling, where no taxes are

paid. The owners get no benefit from the betting that takes place or the wagering that takes place in Internet gaming. To prohibit gambling doesn't seem to go far enough. The racing community is in favour of this section of the bill. They want to see it go through. It's a small step. They know it's not going to solve the problem; it's going to drive the problem further underground. The whole Internet industry is available to most people through local providers, and to take some action against local providers who provide an offshore gambling process seems to be something that would be a lot stronger in legislation than this piece of legislation that merely is going to drive the industry underground. And although this is a step, it is only a very small step and it may be a step backwards as opposed to a step forward. But again, if this was taken out of the bill and was made into a separate piece of legislation or grouped with some other pieces of legislation which are more acceptable to more people, it would be a positive thing for this bill.

I see that I'm out of time, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much, and I want to wish you very good luck on your Bill 136. It's by far a superior piece of legislation to what we have before us.

The Acting Speaker: It's time for questions and comments.

Mr. Prue: I listened intently to the speech from the member from Halton. I even copied down one of his lines, because I thought it succinctly said exactly what needed to be said. He was talking, of course, about the member from Scarborough Centre and what he had said during his two-minute hit. He said, and I hope I got it down—I'm not Hansard, but I hope I got it down—"Reading out a statement that your home will be protected does not necessarily make it so."

I think really that is the legislation we have here today, and I hope to deal with that when I get my own 20 minutes. That, in a nutshell, is the whole conundrum about this piece of legislation: whether this great big, thick act is going to protect people's homes or is not going to protect their homes; whether they are going to stay in their homes or are not going to stay; and, if they get to stay, whether they are going to have a mortgage that they never signed for and never expected. That's the whole thing that is in this act.

I want to commend the member for bringing it down to that one simple statement. It is not enough for government members to simply stand up and say, "Your home is going to be protected." I want to see that and we all deserve to see it within the four walls of the legislation. Try as hard as I might, I cannot find it within the four walls of the legislation. As a matter of fact, when I get my opportunity to speak, I'm going to show you how convoluted this legislation is, even for anyone to try to understand what is contained in it, because it is in schedule E where the whole statement is made about who owns the home, how a debt is incurred, and all of those things.

Quite frankly, I don't know how the member from Scarborough Centre can justify what he said, but I do

commend the member from Halton for showing in one small sentence exactly the preposterousness of what was said.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): Mr. Speaker, I didn't have an opportunity to wish the Clerk a happy retirement, but I wanted to do that on the record. We have an excellent Clerk and an excellent table that you work with, Mr. Speaker, and he will be missed greatly.

But in the remaining time, I just want to comment briefly on comments made earlier. I have to reiterate—I mentioned this last week when I spoke briefly on this bill—the number of calls that I've received in my office regarding the issue of mortgage fraud and the potential for people losing their properties.

I think one of the key issues is that a lot of seniors came to see me or phoned me and said, "Mr. Berardinetti," or Lorenzo, "I don't understand. How can it be that I could lose my home? I saw on television" or read in the newspaper "that someone can fraudulently file a document under the Land Titles Act and I could lose my home." I think to a person, to a senior, after their health being the most important thing they have comes their home property. At least in my riding I find that that's the case: health and then your home. You want to make sure you keep your home, so that in your later years of life when you're retired, you don't have something happen suddenly where you realize there's a fraudulent instrument that has been filed.

Reading from part of the act here, it says that if there is a fraudulent instrument that is filed, a party can put the proper instrument afterwards in order to rectify that situation. Also, "A person who ... suffers a loss can recover compensation from the land titles assurance fund if the person has demonstrated due diligence and is not otherwise restricted from recovering compensation from the fund." So it helps through compensation. That part of the bill is crucial, and we've acted very quickly to rectify a very serious problem.

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I'm pleased to have a chance to respond briefly to the member for Halton, who gave an interesting presentation this afternoon about Bill 152, An Act to modernize various Acts administered by or affecting the Ministry of Government Services. I'm pleased to see that the Minister of Government Services is here in the House, late on a Thursday afternoon before constituency week, to listen to this debate. We do appreciate your interest in the comments that are being brought forward by the opposition parties.

I know the minister would agree with me that this is a long bill, a complicated bill, with some 43 sections, with a diverse number of issues being raised involving the Alcohol and Gaming Regulation and Public Protection Act, the Athletics Control Act, the Bailiffs Act, the Condominium Act—it would take me more than two minutes, probably, to mention the 43 sections that are involved in this bill. I think you could argue that this bill, being 180 pages, would be characterized very much as an

omnibus bill, the type which to members of the Legislature is a challenge in terms of dealing with all of them in a short speech, a 20-minute speech. Even if we have a second reading debate that goes three or four days, we probably don't give sufficient attention to each of these issues.

The minister will probably agree to sending this bill to committee. I would hope that's the case so that we can have some public hearings and ensure that people who have an interest in this bill and the various acts that are opened by this legislation would have a chance to respond to it.

I want to compliment the member for Halton, Mr. Chudleigh, for the excellent presentation he made this afternoon. I think the government would be wise to listen carefully to the comments and observations he brought forward in this debate. I'm looking forward to the speech that's going to be coming forth this afternoon from the member for Oxford as well, I understand, and hope the government will listen to it.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon (Scarborough-Rouge River): I'm very pleased to add my comments to the debate on this particular bill. A lot of the comments and debate to this point have surrounded the Land Titles Act, title fraud and mortgage fraud.

I just want to share that a lot of residents in my riding have raised the issue since this was at the forefront of the news several months ago. My office has been in touch with these people and I've explained what the minister is doing here, which is, if such an instrument is registered against title, that such instrument will be declared null and void through the process and the land title assurance fund will help those people if they had to go through a legal process to restore title to their property. Although I was able to explain to my constituents that the incidence of fraud was very minimal compared to the number of transactions that the ministry does per year, there was still a little bit of concern. The public wanted to know that this will not happen to them. After I explained what we're doing with the new bill, they were quite satisfied.

I just want to add some comments on another part of the bill that recently was in the news in a particular area that I serve, and that is the new powers in the Electrical Safety Authority to proactively protect Ontario families from unsafe electrical products. The police in York region and the Toronto Police Service actually raided many stores in the region where I am, and north of me, in recent months and seized a lot of these products that were getting into the country that were not approved to be sold in Canada. I think it's great that we're doing this, because we have to be concerned about public safety. A lot of this—

The Acting Speaker: It's time for response. The Chair recognizes the member from Halton.

1700

Mr. Chudleigh: I thank the members for Beaches-East York, Scarborough Southwest, Waterloo-Wellington and Scarborough-Rouge River for their comments. Comments are much like debate itself; sometimes the comments being succinct and to the point can make just

as strong a point as a 20-minute ramble on a piece of legislation.

This is a piece of legislation that I think needs more than that two minutes. It certainly needs more than 20 minutes in order to express oneself about the concerns that this piece of legislation has. I didn't get into the funeral home issue in my speech. That would be one that I could spend some time on, as the member for Parkdale-High Park did. She made some very good points. I think I could go a little further, dealing with pioneer cemeteries and the kinds of things that face those cemeteries. There's also the issue of open graves that this legislation I don't believe touches, but it's a real concern to the people who run cemeteries across this province.

I would like to add my comments to those of the member for Waterloo-Wellington. It's often the charge of a parliamentary assistant to carry a bill through the House, so we don't always see a minister of the crown sitting and listening to the debate. In this case, the minister of the crown dealing with this, Mr. Phillips, is sitting in the House, listening to the debate, and I'm glad to see that, because this is a very interesting piece of legislation that a lot of comments are going to be made on. The member mentioned 46 or 54 sections of the bill. I'm sure the minister will pick up some comments and concerns and do his utmost to make things right for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Prue: I welcome the opportunity to enter the debate. There's 20 minutes. I want to talk about a few specific sections.

Although it has received a lot of airtime, the issue that is most important to me, and I believe to my constituents, is that of the land titles; there is no question. I have had people into my office, people have sent me e-mails, people have sent me letters, people have sent me copies of Toronto Star articles where elderly people have been cheated out of their homes, and, quite frankly, the demand is fairly overwhelming that people want an end to this abuse. I have responded to all of them over the last number of months that I was awaiting the legislation of the government, and if the legislation would ensure that their homes were sacrosanct, that they would keep them, that they would not be the subject of having to pay penalties or monies, I would support the legislation. I do look forward to supporting that legislation, but I have to tell you that I want to assure myself on their behalf that this legislation is going to do exactly that.

Now, I am not a lawyer, although I have spent my entire working life around lawyers, whether it be in government as a politician or whether it be in government in my former life as a civil servant. Questions are always questions of law and how laws are interpreted. So I went to the precise section, schedule E, which is found on page 164, if any of the members want to follow along, just to try to determine how and why a house would be registered or unregistered and how the government would deal with it.

I have to tell you, I'm not sure where the government's going. If there's a lawyer in the House, if there's

anyone who can interpret what this actually means to assuage my fears, please come forward and I will cede the floor for just a moment.

Page 164, subsection (9), reads as follows:

"Effect of perfection or non-perfection and priority

"(9) Subject to subsections (10), (11) and (12), subsections 7(3), (4) and (5) apply for the purpose of ascertaining the location of the debtor in order to determine the law governing the effect of perfection or non-perfection, and the priority, of a security interest referred to in subsection 7(1), whether attachment occurs before, on or after the day subsection 3(2) of schedule E to the Ministry of Government Services Consumer Protection and Service Modernization Act, 2006 comes into force."

Any takers?

Mr. Duguid: It's a piece of legislation.

Mr. Prue: My friend from Scarborough Centre says, "It's a piece of legislation." This is what I need to assuage my own fear and the fears of my constituents, because they want to know if they are going to be protected by this bill. This section I just—

Mr. Duguid: Yes.

Mr. Prue: No, no. I'm not sure they are. Just hear me out. This section of the bill and the one I just read out talk about the "debtor." In large part, they could end up being the debtor, under the terms, regulations and definitions that have been contained in this bill, if in fact the bank lends out money or mortgages the house, whether or not they are party to that mortgage.

This is an incredulous and a very strong thing that needs to be done, and I'm not sure that the bill here—I take the minister at his word, because I heard him over the course of several days while I was in the Speaker's chair tell debater after debater what he intended to do. He intends for this to go to committee—and I commend the government for sending it to committee—and he intends to make whatever changes the opposition, the government or anyone else who comes forward makes that are deemed practicable.

I want to make sure that that happens, because in the end we need to protect the legitimate owner of the home. This is not about somebody fraudulently moving into the home and kicking out the owner. That doesn't happen. This is a manipulation of the money market. It is a manipulation of the banks, which always seem to come off okay in this. I don't know why they always seem to come off okay. People are wondering why the bank, the mortgage company, the brokerage house or whoever arranges the mortgage is somehow held safe, and this legislation will largely hold them safe. In the end, they will not be losing anything. They will have insurance, they will have lawyers and they will have the courts. But the person who stands to lose the most is the poor homeowner who, unbeknownst to them, has their land sold out from under them. They don't know because nobody comes and says, "This is my house now" until long after the fact. They don't come and say, "This house is about to be mortgaged, Mr. Jones. Do you have any say on this?" It is done electronically and, quite frankly, in a

number of cases that have come to light, it is done very sloppily by the banks, the mortgage companies and the lawyers involved.

There should be due diligence required of all of these people, and I don't see that in the legislation. Banks should be required by law to do an inspection. Banks and the lawyers should be required by law to go out and knock on the door to ensure themselves that the person seeking to remortgage the house, the person seeking to sell the house, is in fact the one they have been dealing with, but they do not do that. In the end, it all comes down to a question of law.

I listened intently to two speakers, two lawyers who stood up and explained what this law will and will not do. Although he was good, my friend from Niagara Centre was not the most succinct. The one who was the most succinct and clear on what can happen under this laws as it exists before us was the member from Whitby-Ajax. She's a relatively new member of this House, but she has enormous experience in the whole area of mortgage law, of lending and of land transfer. She has huge experience. She explained in some detail how it is possible, under this law that is contained here, for someone to fraudulently take away a person's house. We know how that is done already.

1710

What disturbed me in listening to what she had to say, and what I feel needs to be reiterated to the minister who heard the speech from her—and I'm sure it's far more articulate than my own here today—was that you have a secondary action if the person who fraudulently got the house then legitimately sells it to a third party. It has to be flipped twice. That's the difficulty at that point, because it is then not a fraudulent sale or a fraudulent purpose. This is the difficulty that I can see happening.

These guys are sharp. These guys who buy these houses and do these things are pretty smart people. I don't know how many of you have ever been the subject of a fraudster or how many of you know of people who have had identity theft committed upon them, and how very smart these people are in defrauding the banks, the companies, the gas companies—all of those people who use credit cards. I always wondered who these guys were and how they always seemed to get away with it. And they do get away with it.

I myself, as I have said before in this House, was the victim of identity theft. Someone came along, claimed he was Michael Prue, came up with a fictitious address, even a different date of birth from my own, and the banks and the credit companies fell all over themselves trying to issue credit cards. In the period of one week or two weeks, that individual, whom I never met—nor did the police—and who was never arrested, defrauded the Bank of Nova Scotia, the TD Bank, the Royal Bank, Canadian Tire, Sears, gas companies, and I don't know how many other people before disappearing into thin air.

In the end, it didn't cost me any money. I didn't sign any of those forms. None of those were my credit cards. But in fact, it took me literally months and months and

months of effort and work to clear myself from Canadian Tire, from Sears, from the gas companies, from the credit card companies, from the banks, from the consumer bureaus, from the people I had to phone and phone and phone to say that that was not me and that I didn't owe them that money. In the end, it was all resolved. In the end, I ripped up all my credit cards because I didn't want to be stuck like that any more. It was a long time before I got another one. And to this day, when I try to make a purchase, I get questioned. I get questioned at some great length, using my own legitimate credit card, whether it is me. I have to get on the phone oftentimes and explain to the person at the other end, with my date of birth and secret codes and everything else, that it is in fact me. This is what happened to one individual.

What happened to me is minuscule compared to what happened to the people who've had their homes sold from under them. I want to ensure that when this law is finished, when it's gone through committee, that it doesn't matter whether it was sold once or twice or three times, or whether any portion of it was legitimate. If there was an illegitimate action en route, then the law should ensure that the original owner keeps the home, without any penalty, without any courts, without spending tens and hundreds of thousands of dollars on lawyers.

The law needs to be very clear that the compensation only goes to the innocent buyer of the house, if in fact there is an innocent buyer down the road. That is the person who needs protection for their money. The homeowner needs to be protected for their home. That's what I'm looking to see in the end, and I think that's what the public is expecting to see, not that the innocent homeowner loses their home in the end but is adequately compensated for it. Because a home is more than just the value of the property. It's more than just the \$100,000 or \$500,000 that you will get when it's settled. A home has memories. A home is where people bring up their children. A home is where people retire and expect to live for the rest of their lives. In some instances, people hope to die in their bed in their home. A home is a sacred thing to them. Money cannot compensate. In the end, they need to be protected so that their home is theirs. And the buyer, the unknowing person who comes down the road, who is himself or herself a victim of the fraud, needs to be compensated. That's what I'm looking at to see what happens.

I'm looking, Mr. Minister, to see action in four additional areas, and you've heard them before, that the land titles assurance fund will be adequate and sufficient monies made available to people for compensation, should these fraudsters get hold and should they take hold. I have no doubt in my mind that this has been successful several times. Minds far brighter than my own are out there trying to finagle and think of new ways of perfecting this.

I want to make sure that there is a clear law on who can register documents and that documents need, in many cases, to be put in by hand. Documents that I would suggest need to be not electronically done but put in by

hand are any ones that require a power of attorney. It may be as simple as that, that if a document is by power of attorney, it must be registered by hand, it must be seen by officials who must authenticate the veracity of a power of attorney. That was used in a couple of cases. If that's done, I'll think that's a safer thing too.

I'm looking to see a notification system where the banks and mortgage companies and others who lend out the mortgages must, by law, notify the previous owner of the house to see whether they are still the owner of the house. It would cost a 51-cent stamp or a visit or something, but it would ensure that that is done. When you're looking at millions of dollars—or hundreds of thousands of dollars for an individual home—it doesn't seem to be much, considering everything else that one pays.

I'd like to look at the whole use of powers of attorney for the sale of houses. Powers of attorney are fairly easy to get. I have a power of attorney for a family member. They're fairly easy to get. You sign them over. If the person feels that you are trustworthy, they can simply do that. Many people are unsuspecting, and we need to look at the powers of attorney when it comes to something as large as the sale of a home.

Having said that, that's what I'm looking for in that particular section. There are some other sections I'm looking at, but they're not as near and dear to me. The whole issue of the liquor act has been mentioned before. I don't know how strongly this bill is going to stop date rape drugs being put into drinks if drinks are taken into the washroom. I do know that in my previous life as a mayor and on the board of health of the city of Toronto, questioning about drinks and washrooms, the standard answer was given that drinks were not allowed in washrooms because it permitted intoxication. It permitted people who would take a mickey or a small flask into the washroom to pour that into the drinks. The bartender, the servers would not be suspecting a person who had ordered one or two drinks in a night of being intoxicated and then would suddenly find them that way either in the bathroom itself or on the floor or somewhere in the restaurant and would be legitimately perplexed—and responsible in law for how that person got into that circumstance with the limited alcohol that was being consumed. That's why drinks were not allowed in the washroom.

If they're now going to be allowed in the washroom, we also run the risk—I just want to tell you, I'm not opposed to this section, but there is the risk—that we will go back to a time and a place where people took alcohol in with them—in a purse, in their back pocket, in their suit pocket, whatever—and will be able to add to the drinks in the washroom. It's cheaper. People do it mostly for money, but we also have—that's the other side of the coin.

1720

I also wonder about the bingo halls, because as the mayor of East York and as a megacity councillor—I'm not sure which one I was—the city of Toronto looked at the whole issue of bingos, how the monies were given to

bingos—there were a lot of people wanting to come and make money off the bingos—and who got the proceeds, which charities got them. I was the vice-chair of the bingo committee at the city of Toronto for a while, and I remember asking about how the bingos could make more money and innocently posing the question, "Why don't you serve alcohol? You could make some money if you served alcohol, if you had beer or wine." To a bingo and to a patron, I was told that they did not want to get into that game. If they went into it, others would go into it. It would become a never-ending cycle, and the people who were their patrons did not expect or desire to have alcohol in the bingo facility.

In fact, one older woman who came before the committee put it succinctly to me in a way that I had never really thought about. She said that going to bingo was her little piece of heaven. It wasn't so much the bingo and all the smoke that was in it and that stuff that was heavenly; it was her opportunity to escape from her house. It was a place where there was no violence. It was a place where there were no drunks and no alcohol. It was a place that she went to get respite from all of that. She put it very succinctly and very calmly in a couple of sentences, and that was the reality. I'm not sure; I've not heard a single bingo operator or a single bingo patron come up to me and say that they want alcohol in the bingo halls.

Some have told me that they want smoking back. I've heard that, and I'm sure you have too, Mr. Minister, but I've not heard a single one say they want alcohol. I don't know why we're going in this direction, unless of course there is a community request for it. If there is, fine, but if there isn't, I'm not sure that it's going to serve any real purpose.

I've only got a minute left. I was going to get into the last section. I'll just say what I've received: a couple of letters. One was addressed to Minister Phillips on November 1 from the Institute of Communications and Advertising about Bill 152, asking for an opportunity to appear before committee. I'll just quote the one sentence: "Given the impact of Bill 152 on the advertising business in Ontario and across the country, the ICA was both disappointed and surprised that the government made absolutely no effort to consult stakeholders on the bill." I trust that they will be invited to committee and will have some say and input.

There are some other editorial comments on the same thing: "Online Gambling to Be Targeted" in the Lindsay Daily Post of yesterday, and "Blame Ontario: Internet Gambling Ads Under Attack," October 27, 2006. We need to have a good look at what is being said here and see whether the law will stack up to everything that is supposed to take place.

I thank you for the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the minister.

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): I appreciate the thoughtful comments from the member from Beaches–East York. I'll focus my comments on the real estate fraud, the title fraud.

Just to assure the member, at the core of what we're doing here is to ensure that no one will lose their title to fraud and no one will have a fraudulent document registered against their title. In other words, you can almost lose your title if someone registers a mortgage that you're going to have to pay. At the core of the bill, that's what we are doing here. I'm satisfied legally that it's sound, but we may find that we need to tinker with the wording. But that's the core intent of what we've got here: to make sure no one loses the title or has a fraudulent document registered.

There are several other things in the bill as well. We're giving the registrar, the person who can dictate who has access to the system, more power to either revoke or suspend licences for suspected fraudsters by us working with our legal community and with the enforcement community.

I would say that there are some other things we have to do. We have to improve the land title insurance fund, and we will improve that. We have to do more on determining who has access to the system. There are three parts of it: viewing the title system, registering documents, and transfers. Transfers are where you transfer title. In my opinion, that has to be the most restrictive. Registering documents: I think we'll have to look at who can do that—mortgages and liens.

I just want to assure the member on his key point: The intent of the bill is very much that no one loses their title, nor would anyone have a fraudulent document registered against that title. You can begin to reassure your constituents that that's the intent of the bill. I hope it's the content of the bill; if it's not, it will be.

Mr. Chudleigh: Those are interesting comments from the minister. Of course, a lot of those authorities might be contained in regulation and it might very well happen, but from the way the bill is structured now, from the comments from the member for Whitby, from the comments from the member for Parkdale-High Park, that doesn't seem to be the way it's going to work. There's a great deal of concern that although you are going to maintain ownership of your home, that ownership may have clouds on it. You may be in debt, either through legal fees in order to get your home back or with a mortgage that you had no point in taking out, that you hadn't intended to take out, especially in your sunset years. You work all your life to pay off a mortgage, and all of a sudden—boom—you have a new one.

The member for Beaches-East York has a long history in dealing with local politics. He was a former mayor of East York, I believe, and has a long history of dealing with people and talking to them on the streets. The difference between a municipal politician and a provincial politician is that municipal politicians are in their ridings all the time, and they meet and know and understand people's concerns. I think this member pointed out in his speech the real concerns people have in a couple of areas of this bill.

Again, I would reiterate that it's too bad this bill is so big, so onerous, that it's very difficult to get through the

huge number of sections that are in this bill. There seems to be some debate as to exactly how many sections there are, but it's up around that 50 mark somewhere. It's too bad that these important items and issues before the people of Ontario won't be properly debated in an omnibus bill form.

Mr. Berardinetti: I appreciate the comments that were made by my friend the member for Beaches-East York. I just wanted to make a very brief point, and that is that I'm not practising law right now. I am a lawyer. But when I did practise in the early 1990s, one of the biggest problems my partner and I had was in the real estate area. Insurance claims against lawyers went up tremendously, and the reason was that lawyers were offering to do real estate transactions for a ridiculously low price. In fact, the prices were so low that my partner and I couldn't understand how they could possibly make a profit, unless they handed the materials off to a law clerk or a secretary to review and then the lawyer would just sign off on the document and file it.

As a result, a lot of improper registrations took place, and a lot of problems occurred. As a result, many people ended up suing the lawyers who were involved in these cases, and it created the new insurance for lawyers, which, to this day, is quite expensive for a practising lawyer. I paid into it when I did practise law, and it kept going higher and higher. I think one year it was near \$6,000 per lawyer just to cover the costs of these fraudulent transactions.

I think this bill is trying to deal with documents that are fraudulent being registered. Part of this can also be human, and we hope that the law society and those who govern lawyers keep an eye on the few bad apples who are out there, as in any other profession, unfortunately, who may not do due diligence on their part and may file something that is fraudulently registered and not properly examined.

Those are my comments.

1730

Mr. Hardeman: I would like to thank the member from Beaches-East York for the presentation made on this bill. I think it's indicative of the problem with this bill, its magnitude and the fact that, as you read it, it doesn't seem to deliver on the purpose of the bill as it was addressed by the minister upon the introduction of the bill and was again explained in the two-minute presentation the minister just made. I think all of us would agree that the intent he expressed is what we would all want to see, particularly as it relates to mortgage fraud: that no one's home should ever be lost because of fraudulent action on someone else's part. You should not lose title to your home, nor should you wake up some morning and find that you had a home that was paid for but now, with your limited income, you can't make the mortgage payment that someone else has created on your home and in fact you lose it only a few weeks down the road.

That's really the purpose of that part of the bill, and as was presented by the member from East York and as I

read the bill—I don't purport to be an expert on mortgage fraud either, but I don't think the bill actually deals with that issue. That's why I think it's so important that we have the debate and hear from not only this House but from the public at committee hearings. We take the minister at his word when he suggests that is the intent of what he wants in the bill and that amendments will be made to the bill to actually accomplish that goal.

The Acting Speaker: It's time for a response.

Mr. Prue: I'd like to thank the four members of the House who stood to comment on my statements, the Minister of Government Services and the members from Halton, Scarborough Southwest and Oxford.

First of all, I want to commend the Minister of Government Services. This is the first time in the five years I have been here, not that a minister has been here but that I've actually had a minister respond to the bill, take my suggestions, assuage my fears and promise to do what I have requested be done in order to make a good bill better. I wish this would happen every day. I want it on the record that having a minister here who does what Minister Phillips has done here today would certainly make bills' passage through this House and through committee much easier and much more amenable to all members, especially members who are not on the government side. We do want to make sure that the legislation is as good as it can be, and our job in the opposition is of course to point out any potential flaws that may be contained therein. Having spoken to the bill and having listened to the minister, I thank him. We will see what happens on the whole issue of mortgage fraud in committee. Hopefully, if there are any errors or omissions, they can be improved.

I also want to thank the members from Halton, Scarborough Southwest and Oxford for speaking in terms of things I had initially raised in my 20-minute speech. All too often that doesn't happen either, but the members seem to have been attentive and were dealing with the same issues. I thank them for their comments.

Hopefully, when this bill goes to committee, we can do what is right by all the residents of Ontario and ensure that mortgage fraud is made history in this province.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Hardeman: I'm pleased to comment on Bill 152, An Act to modernize various Acts administered by or affecting the Ministry of Government Services. I think it's rather important. For anyone watching, and I'm sure the people in this Legislature are listening, it's the same thing everyone has been debating since routine proceedings and question period finished. The reason I think it's important to read the title is that the title would imply that it's just a housekeeping bill to deal with a number of issues just to modernize the language and the processes put in place in the legislation that affect the Ministry of Government Services. Having said that, I do believe, as we look at the bill—let me check. I think it's 179 or 180 pages. That's a lot of housekeeping and a lot of modernizing that's required. I was taken with that, to think that a bill that would just be dealing with the issues

at the Ministry of Government Services would require that much housekeeping. Then of course we checked the bill, and we found that it deals with quite a number of issues well beyond what one would consider the modernizing of the legislation. I just want to go through the list of some of the things it does.

We've heard a lot of debate in the House this afternoon about real estate fraud and changes to the land registration system. I think, if we look at the bill, that's likely the section that's going to get the greatest amount of debate, because the fraud that takes place in the real estate industry has one of the larger impacts of the issues that we're dealing with here in this bill. So I think it's natural to assume that that would require a lot of debate. But at the same time, I think it's not natural to assume that one would think that was just modernizing an act in the Legislature. I would be more inclined to think that's something that should require thorough debate and a piece of legislation that dealt just with that, so we could actually have the people who are involved in that and the stakeholders be aware that this was taking place and they would have an opportunity to make their presentations to that very important issue.

The second one I wanted to mention was the gift cards and prohibiting expiry dates. I think that would be on the other side of the ledger. I truly believe it's an important issue. I don't think that if someone buys a gift card and pays the Queen's currency for that and gives it to someone, and just because it's misplaced and it's laying there for a while, at some point the seller of that certificate could not honour what they took in good faith. They took the obligation to provide that service or that product for that money and I think they should be held to that. That's a very good part of the bill and I think it would come to modernization and the housekeeping part of it. I think that would fit.

Identity theft protection measures: Again, I think that's a very important issue. The member from Beaches–East York mentioned the fact that he had had trouble with someone using his credit card and how difficult it was to solve the problem. He had convinced the credit card company that he didn't owe the money, but at the same time he had a lot of trouble getting all the people to recognize that his credit wasn't bad; it was someone else using his credit card.

As recently as about six months ago, I got a call one Monday morning questioning me as to what I was doing in St. Thomas and whether I was using my credit card this morning. I said, "No, I'm not in St. Thomas and I'm not using my credit card." "Well, could someone else be using your credit card, because there's some erratic spending going on on your credit card?" They gave me some of the numbers of what was being spent, and I said, "Well, when was all this done?" He said, "This morning. That's why we're calling you, because all these purchases were made this morning." He said, "Could someone else have your credit card?" I said, "No. There are two copies. I have one and Reta has the other one, and she is at work in Sweaburg, so she is not in St. Thomas."

So obviously there was no one spending my money in St. Thomas. "Well," he said, "they may not be spending your money, but they're using your credit card."

It turns out that \$2,400-plus had been spent that morning, and he called me at about 11. I have no idea how they did it, but they had spent it and I did get in my next statement a listing of the expenditures and where it had been spent. I was fortunate, a little more fortunate than the member from Beaches-East York. I was told immediately I would not have to pay the bill, and it never was on my statement again. But at the same time, that's how easy it is for someone to get your private information and use private credit cards. So I think it's very important that we look at the issue of identity theft and protection measures.

The expansion of ServiceOntario: I support the minister's suggestion as to what needs to be done there, that ServiceOntario could be doing more than it's presently doing. It's a service that the government has, and the more services we can provide through that to the people of Ontario, the better. I think that's a good issue.

1740

The Internet gaming and prohibition on advertising Internet gaming, I think we would agree, is not a bad suggestion. Yet, as we look at the comments that have come in from people who deal with that issue and look at that, there are a lot of people suggesting that stopping that advertising may not be as simple as the legislation purports it to be because of the breadth and size of the Internet system, where most of what's happening is happening outside of Ontario—or outside of Canada, for that matter. So it's going to be very difficult, and there are a lot of people who suggest that the bill may not meet the objective that the minister has set in doing that.

Liquor licence changes, including allowing patrons to take drinks into washrooms: I have some concerns. I think we all have been reading the stories in the paper and recognizing in our community that this is happening a lot: People go into a bar, and then have to leave the bar itself and go into the washroom, and then they come back and something has been added to their drink. I don't think that's an acceptable thing to happen, so it's appropriate to look at how we can correct the problem. But we need to be careful on that, just suggesting, as we do in this bill, that we may regulate the expansion of the licensed area so that people can take their drinks with them when they walk out of the actual licensed area and go into the washroom or out into the hallway. It sounds to me like it's not very well thought out in the bill as to what that actually does. If that is the answer to the problem of date rape and slipping the goods into the drink, I would suggest that the minister automatically would have just changed the licensing system to include all licensed areas. Obviously, in order to get a licence, you have to have the washrooms, and you have to have it defined, and that's all inspected when the premises are licensed, that you would include those areas just in the licence area. The bill doesn't do that. The bill suggests that that will be an option the owner of the establishment will make, whether he will allow that or not.

I guess the question would be, if the owner of the establishment decides he has some concerns about what will happen when he allows that—it's been brought up in the debate previously and I've heard it in my community—then, if someone takes their glass out of the licensed establishment on their own, they may very well come back with their drink replenished because they brought in their own. So they now go into the bar and don't have to buy their next drink because they brought it in the bottle. Or it may very well be that people go to exchange drinks with someone else, and that someone was not served underage but 10 minutes later may be sitting in the licensed establishment with a drink that they never really purchased there, but it was purchased there in a roundabout way. We have no way of protecting the owner of the establishment or the servers to make sure that they are not serving underage drinkers.

If those concerns are addressed, or are weighed against the protection of the drink, I think the government should make the decision as to which one weighs the heaviest. Will carrying the drink with them protect society better, and will that be more advantageous than the risk they're taking? If the bar owners and the owners of the establishment are asked to make that decision, then the public, I would think, would have a concern as to why one establishment would allow that to happen and the other one wouldn't. If it's good for one, why wouldn't it be good for everyone? If the government is sure that it's the right thing to do, I think they would do it for them all, or they would say, "I don't think this is going to work, so we won't do it for any." I think the minister needs to be more definitive. If that's the answer, let's get on with implementing it in all drinking establishments so the safety of our patrons is the same regardless of which establishment one goes into.

The access-to-privacy changes: I know that's required as we look at the issue of enforcement and going across ministries. Obviously there is a need to have regulations or legislation to allow the exchange of information between ministries. I don't see any problem with that, and if we're going to have a more efficient operation within the government services ministry, I think that's a good idea.

The electrical safety, changes to regulations and enforcement regarding unsafe products: My understanding of that section, and the minister can correct me, is that the enforcement of the regulations is with the consumer who purchased the product as opposed to the distributor who was distributing the product that doesn't pass a certain standard. It would seem to me that we would have a better answer if we were actually stopping, or doing our best to stop, the unsafe products from being on sale as opposed to telling people after they bought them that they shouldn't use that product because it doesn't meet the safety standard.

The changes to the Business Corporations Act are one of those things that do relate directly to the title of the bill, housekeeping, a modernization of the corporation act as to who is on the board of directors. It seems like a reasonable approach to modernize that.

Changes to the bereavement sector legislation: I think we've had some debate about that, the issue of the bereavement sector and changing the fact so that if the funeral home is private sector, it's treated differently than if it's a public sector, not-for-profit organization. I think there's a real concern there that you have to have a level playing field for all the players in the game. To give preferential treatment tax-wise and so forth for the not-for-profit sector I think is not fair to the good folks there.

The other thing that was mentioned earlier was the issue of not having to be a funeral director to be in the business of selling that service to customers. Having gone through it a time or two with family and so forth, I think it's very important that the people who do the facilitating of the funeral and the whole bereavement process are the type of people who understand the situation and have the experience to deal with that. That's very important. I think that's the type of thing that would come out at the committee hearings to make sure not that we restrict what people could or couldn't do but, at the same time, that only people who are qualified to do certain things are the ones doing them.

There's another list in the bill that actually house-keeping. The Athletics Control Act contains search warrant provisions.

Changes of name: I think that's one of the things that our constituency offices had a lot of concerns with, when people want to change their name and the length of time it takes and the things that they have to go through. I think it's a very good idea to look at being able to facilitate, to modernize the systems as it's going through and to dispense with the publication of notice for the name change in the Ontario Gazette.

The Condominium Act: Again, that's just a change in the time periods for notice for prosecutions.

The Real Estate Business Brokers Act, 2002: It would ensure that brokers and salespersons maintain insurance. I think that's a very important thing. That's a real consumer protection item to make sure that people who are providing a service are insured for anything that goes wrong with the service they're providing.

1750

There are a couple of others—the Repair and Storage Liens Act—to create the cost-control mechanism for seizures of property. Again, I think it's important that there is some standard, but in that one, I think it's very important that we also make sure that we don't put something in place that prohibits the ability of business to do business, that they don't get hung out to dry on the lien part and the seizure part because we've set limits that are well below what they should be.

I just wanted to go back to the original premise of the bill and the fact that I have concern with the size and the number of issues that are in there. I think it's very important that most of the bill be passed, and I support it going through as expediently as possible, but there are things in it that require a lot more debate. So I think that's very important.

Seeing that the minister is listening attentively, I have here a quote that relates to this, and I thought I'd like to

read it into the record: "As previous members have said, this is an extremely complex bill. It amends 27 different acts"—and, of course, this one here amends about that many—"and creates two new acts. We're truly dealing with an omnibus bill. I happen to think it's inappropriate to do this, but the government can do whatever it wants, and I think that's unfortunate." That was Gerry Phillips on November 7, 2002.

Incidentally, the bill he was talking about was a budget measure, the Keeping the Promise for a Strong Economy Act. I think it would likely be quite a bit similar to this one right here. I couldn't have said it better myself. I know the government can pass it, and I expect they will.

The one other thing, though—I don't know where I've got it here, but it was another quote that I just wanted to read in.

"I can tell you that even before the bill was introduced we asked the government not to introduce a bill in an omnibus form. We said that if there were four separate special advisers who came up with four separate sets of recommendations affecting four separate and distinct communities, then surely, logically and in fairness there ought to be four separate pieces of legislation."

That was Dalton McGuinty on December 20, 1999. That was on the Fewer Politicians Act. It would seem to me, if that's the way it was then, I expect that's the way it is now. So I'm concerned that we have some major changes as it relates to the mortgage fraud situation and so forth.

I just very quickly wanted to say—and I was pleased to hear the minister say again that no one should lose their house or be stuck with a mortgage on it. If that is not what the bill says—as I read it, it doesn't—I hope that before we get through with the public hearings and the amendments it will do those two things: that no one would lose title on their house; and no one, through fraudulent action, would end up with a mortgage on their house that they had no part in putting there.

Thank you very much for the time allotted for me to speak to this bill. We look forward to much further debate and committee hearings to make sure that when it's finished, it will be in the best interests of all Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker: Time for questions and comments. The Chair recognizes the member from Beaches–East York—oh, the minister? The member from Beaches–East York gives his time to the minister.

Hon. Mr. Phillips: I appreciate the comments from the member from Oxford and his going through the bill in quite a few areas. I can only touch on a few of them. Your comment regarding if the bar should be mandatory: I think there are 11,000 licensed establishments in the province of Ontario, and some of them are like a Swiss Chalet. I'm not sure that the Swiss Chalet has the same needs as a large bar does. We were trying to be conscious of reflecting the needs of our business community and not trying to have sort of a one-size-fits-all proposal.

On Internet gaming, that's quite a little debate. What we've found there—and the member for Halton knows

the horse industry very well. They came to us and said, "Listen, we're being very dramatically and negatively impacted by Internet gaming. Internet gaming is illegal. We're playing by the rules. What are you going to do?" This was one step that we, the province of Ontario, could see we could take as generating some fair interest.

The Ministry of Government Services does have quite a few different areas that we're dealing with. It's a cliché, but what I find is that we live in a rapidly changing society and the needs change quickly. Real estate fraud is a good example of that. We're trying to keep up. I think we, the Legislature, have to find ways in which our laws can keep pace with the pace of change that's going on in society, and that's the purpose of the bill, trying to modernize our acts.

Mr. Chudleigh: In the time remaining, it's a well-thought-out speech, as you might expect from the member, who has dealt with municipal government and knows full well how to discuss issues with people and the issues that concern people. His large network of contacts allows him to understand how the system works and to reflect those comments in this place.

With a bill of this size, it's difficult to get the reflection on each and every section of the bill. I was particularly interested in his comments and quotes from members who are now sitting over there and were at one time sitting over here in frustration. I can well imagine that there are probably enough quotes from the member for St. Catharines on omnibus bills and time allocation motions that they would fill up several binders of Hansard if we could pull them all together. That might be an interesting project if someone had an intern to pull together the member for St. Catharines' comments in those areas. Certainly when he was sitting over here—I think he sat there—he would go on for an hour in those days when he had that opportunity to talk about time allocation motions and omnibus bills, which he used to say stifled debate in one way or another and didn't make for good legislation when it came before the House. I would never have admitted it when I sat over there, but when I sat way over there at the back, I may have agreed with some of those issues.

Mr. Prue: I listened intently, as always, to the member from Oxford and what he had to say. He offered very many things to the debate, some of which had been said by other members, but what I wanted in my two minutes to zero in on is the whole issue about omnibus bills. It's omnibus bills that I think get him a little angry, and perhaps all members of the opposition, because what you have here is a 200-page bill with 40 sections, 40 different laws, and trying to put some kind of thought and careful analysis behind what is contained in the body of it.

There is no doubt that the overwhelming number of speakers have spoken about the mortgage fraud issue. There is enough in that particular portion of the bill to justify its own bill. There's no question. That would occupy the amount of time necessary to carefully look at that within this Legislature.

I understand the need for omnibus bills. I understand omnibus bills when there is a whole set of non-contentious issues that do not need to occupy the time of the Legislature. But he is correct: This one portion of the bill has grabbed public attention like very few issues that come before this House. The number of phone calls, the number of e-mails and the number of people who came in to visit me, worried about what was going to happen to their house, was far more than I see on literally every other single issue before this Legislature. I would hope that the government is listening. I would hope, although it won't have anything to do with this particular bill, that in the future, if there are omnibus bills, and I know there will be, contentious or huge issues not be included in them. They need to be separated out. They need to be debated solely and on the merit or non-merit of them.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Time for response. The Chair recognizes the member from Oxford.

Mr. Hardeman: First of all, I want to thank the minister for his comments on my presentation and also thank him for the answers to some of the concerns. Although I agree that there are differences between Swiss Chalet and a bar, I think we need to make sure that public protection is the same regardless of which bar they go into. That's really the point I was trying to make.

I do want to quickly point out an article in the Toronto Sun on October 20: "But critics warn when it comes to the fastest-growing crime of identity theft and mortgage fraud—which has ripped off innocent victims of billions of dollars and tossed them from their homes—the Liberals' new laws don't go far enough." That's referring to the laws being introduced here. That was introduced, of course, on the 19th.

In his statement when he introduced the bill, the minister he committed to—and I think this is important—"actively question who should be able to register documents in the land registration system and what requirements they need to meet regulation authority" and to "consider a notification system that notifies property owners when certain dealings are registered against their property." The question really is, Minister, "actively question" and "consider" should be done before the introduction of the bill, not after. One would think that we would have an answer to that, that we could be debating whether it was the right answer rather than just to actively question and consider who that should be.

That's really the problem I have with the bill, and it relates to the mortgage fraud issue. Is what is in the bill going to be any better than what we presently have? That's a real concern I have. I hope that at the end of the debate and at the end of these committee hearings that will be answered, "Yes it will, and it will solve the problem."

The Acting Speaker: It being past 6 p.m. of the clock, this House stands adjourned until Tuesday, November 14, 2006, at 1:30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 1802.

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No. 119A

N° 119A

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 14 November 2006

Mardi 14 novembre 2006

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 14 November 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 14 novembre 2006

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO ARTISTS

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): Today is the all-party arts day at Queen's Park. We recognize the contributions that arts and culture make to our society and welcome members of the arts community and the Ontario Arts Council.

Today is also a day we mark the government's broken promise to Ontario's arts community. The McGuinty Liberal government made a solemn promise to Ontario artists in their 2003 election platform. It said, "Within the first two years of our mandate, [the minister's advisory council for arts and culture] will produce a report on the status of the artist in Ontario in the 21st century. This report will be used to develop status of the artist legislation for our artists in Ontario...." More than three years later, neither this House nor Ontario's arts community has seen either a report or legislation. This is a broken promise by the government.

I have to ask, when will they release a report? When will they introduce legislation? Why is simply writing a report within two years such a hard promise for the Liberals to keep? Maybe the government doesn't want an act, and, by waiting so long, there will not be any time to pass one before the next election. Ontario's arts communities want answers, and if they don't get them, they will remember next October.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): This would be a good time to remind our guests that only members can participate in the activities of the Legislature.

CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): It's a privilege today for me to stand in recognition of World Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease Day, or World COPD Day. I can tell you that it's a very important realm of illness and I say that, of course, both as a physician as well as an MPP.

COPD includes emphysema and chronic bronchitis. In a kind of rough-and-ready definition, it's sort of like

trying to breathe through a straw all day long. Unfortunately, people with COPD have difficulty performing simple tasks like walking upstairs, because they struggle for every breath.

Unfortunately, there's something in the order of 270,000 patients diagnosed with COPD in Ontario today, and probably an equal number who remain undiagnosed. Unfortunately, about 115 individuals are admitted with COPD to hospitals daily. It's ranked as the fifth major cause of hospitalization.

Tomorrow is World COPD Day. In recognition of this, the Ontario Lung Association, along with its federal counterpart, is hosting an event this evening in the legislative dining room from 5 to 7 p.m. I would encourage all MPPs and their staff to attend. At the event, the lung association will be releasing startling information about the impact of COPD generally, and particularly on women, because COPD is now one of the few leading causes of death for which the impact is increasing rapidly.

Thank you for this time. I invite you to join us for autographs with NHL star Dennis Hull.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I'm also going to speak today about World Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease Day, which is tomorrow, November 15. It is a respiratory disease that unfortunately is increasing but to some extent is still quite unknown and unfamiliar to people. It is a disease that causes the airways of our lungs to be inflamed and become obstructed or blocked. It makes it difficult to breathe in the same way that chronic bronchitis and emphysema do. People with COPD have that shortness of breath, and obviously their activities are quite limited. They often will tell you that having COPD is like breathing through a straw every minute of every day. I think you can imagine how difficult that would be for an individual.

There is no cure, but symptoms can be managed. It is a leading cause of death, and a cause of death that unfortunately is on the rise. It's the fourth leading cause of death in our country. Again, I want to say that 50% of Ontarians will tell you that they've never heard of COPD.

Today we have a special event in the dining room. All MPPs and staff are invited to attend. They're going to be sharing some information about the impact of it on women. We will hear that deaths among women are almost as high as deaths from breast cancer. So we do want to make sure that people are aware of this serious disease.

ONTARIO ARTISTS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): I tabled a resolution, and this is it:

That, in the opinion of this House, the Minister of Culture proceed forthwith to introduce status-of-the-artist legislation as promised by her in this Legislature on May 15, 2006.

Today we celebrate the arts at Queen's Park, and I ask that we also celebrate the artist—not only celebrate, but also assist, as our artists are suffering. Ontario lags behind other provinces and other jurisdictions in provisions for artists. We desperately need status-of-the-artist legislation, legislation that was promised in this House on May 15 of this year by our Minister of Culture. We need protection for children in the arts and income averaging for those whose income varies dramatically every year. We need benefits and retraining for artists and we need housing for artists. As the corporatization of our culture continues unchecked, we need opportunities for our artists, and by “artists” I'm speaking of musicians, filmmakers, writers and actors as well as visual artists. To celebrate the arts and not bring in promised legislation—that is, status-of-the-artist legislation—for the artist is not to celebrate the arts at all. Without artists, there are no arts.

1340

QUINTE AMATEUR RADIO CLUB

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward–Hastings): There are about a hundred thousand reasons why I'm proud to represent the riding of Prince Edward–Hastings, that number reflecting the number of individuals who live in my area.

I would like today to recognize a group of my constituents who since 1947 have very quietly contributed to our community. They're the members of the Quinte Amateur Radio Club. This club was formed by a group of engineers from Northern Electric, now Nortel. While obviously the club was formed to enable hams to communicate with each other, they have considerably extended the services they provide to our community. The Quinte Amateur Radio Club has regularly become involved in such events as the Super Cities Walk for MS, the Cheerios Mother Daughter Walk for Heart and Stroke, the Belleville Community Policing Halloween Safe Streets project and the Prince Edward County Marathon. They performed yeoman service during the ice storm a few years ago.

I'm particularly excited by the most recent project, which is supporting one of our schools, Centre Hastings Secondary School, to have direct radio contact with astronauts on the International Space Station, scheduled to happen on Monday, November 20. This will be only the 14th radio contact by a school with ISS in Canada and the fifth in Ontario. I am especially proud that this will be the only contact for this space station crew with any school in North America. This fantastic experience

for the students is possible only because of this radio club and the wonderful work done by the teachers in our school system.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Quinte Amateur Radio Club on their 60th anniversary and to thank them for the tremendous contribution to our community and province.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Today I'd like to welcome the Police Association of Ontario here on their annual lobby day. I know president Bob Baltin and CAO Bruce Miller are here, and they represent 30,000 uniformed officers here in Ontario. I think there are a lot of things we can do in this House to improve community safety and to make improvements for not only the folks here in Ontario but for people right across the country.

One of those things is to get the legislation that the Harper government has brought forward and stop the obstruction by the opposition. One thing the Liberal Party here in this House can do is to ask their cousins in Ottawa to stop the obstruction we're seeing on some very valuable legislation. Since the beginning of the Parliament in Ottawa, only three of 11 crime bills have actually been passed, because they have been obstructed by the federal cousins of these folks here, right across the floor. For example, C-10, mandatory minimum sentences for serious drug and firearms crimes, has been halted right now, as we speak. Bill C-21, which amends the Firearms Act, has been delayed as well. The age of protection—protecting children from sexual predators by raising the age from 14 to 16 years of age—has also been delayed by their federal cousins in Ottawa. If there's anything this government can do to help people in this country and in Ontario today, they can get their federal cousins to stop the obstruction and get this legislation passed to help all Canadians and Ontarians.

LANGUAGE TRAINING

FORMATION LINGUISTIQUE

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): I rise today to recognize English-as-a-Second-Language Week and French-as-a-Second-Language Week in Ontario. I commend the dedicated instructors of ESL and FSL for the important work they do in assisting newcomers to settle in this province.

Notre gouvernement reconnaît que les nouveaux arrivants auront plus de succès lorsqu'ils développent une compétence soit dans la langue anglaise ou dans la langue française—les langues parlées dans le monde du travail.

That's why we are working to transform adult, non-credit language training in Ontario so that it better fits the needs of our newcomers. Last year, more than 140,000 newcomers arrived in Ontario to begin new lives. They are better educated and more skilled than ever before.

They are skilled in fields ranging from medicine to architecture. The sooner they are able to put their talents to work for Ontario and the global marketplace, the better off they are, and the better off we are as a province.

The McGuinty government recognizes the challenge and the importance of helping newcomers get the language training they need so they can thrive in the workplace and life here in Ontario. Ontario invests more than \$130 million annually on language training and settlement services, more than any other province. Our success in helping newcomers obtain the English and French language skills they need has been, and will continue to be, built through partnership with organizations like TESL Ontario and almost 4,000 instructors who work with the newcomers.

Notre gouvernement va continuer à travailler avec nos associés pour fournir des soutiens qui vont contribuer au succès de nos nouveaux arrivés.

SYLVIA SUTHERLAND

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I rise today to pay tribute to Mayor Sylvia Sutherland. I had the distinct pleasure of serving with Her Worship for 12 of my 18 years as a member of Peterborough city council. During those years, she faced many challenges and made many tough decisions that weren't always popular, but always had the residents of Peterborough's best interests at heart. She was tough when she had to be and accomplished much while in office.

In the days following the flood of July 15, 2004, she demonstrated courage and leadership as she spearheaded the recovery effort. Sylvia was a mayor with vision and understanding of the need to create an economic plan that would benefit Peterborough today and in the future.

I recently had the opportunity to attend an event in her honour, and I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, there wasn't a seat or a parking lot spot to be found. She leaves behind a legacy of accomplishments that any one of us here today, sitting in this House, would be proud of. The residents of Peterborough owe her a great debt of gratitude.

I'd like to conclude by saying congratulations to Mayor Sylvia Sutherland, the longest-serving mayor in Peterborough's history, on a job well done. May you have a long and happy retirement.

BRUCE DUNCAN

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): I rise today to advise the House of the passing of one of Ontario's most devoted environmentalists. Bruce Duncan died in an automobile accident last Saturday.

Mr. Duncan was the very able chief executive officer of the Hamilton Conservation Authority. Previously, he had been with the Grand River Conservation Authority for 15 years. He was one-time president of the Hamilton Naturalists' Club, and in 1991 founded the Niagara Peninsula Hawkwatch program.

In his early years with the Hamilton Conservation Authority, Mr. Duncan instilled in thousands of children an appreciation for nature. He reached a wider audience as a frequent guest on radio and television in Hamilton, and I remember his very gentle and very effective manner.

Mr. Duncan was respected in the environmental community for his passion for conservation, but, equally, he was respected in development circles for his realistic advice on development issues near watersheds.

I had the pleasure of working with Mr. Duncan very recently, as the government made a special gift to the conservation authority. Just two weeks ago, Minister Caplan and I were able to hand over the deed to 180 acres of the Eramosa Karst lands in upper Stoney Creek to the authority. It was something Bruce worked very hard on, and he and the authority had some wonderful plans for those rare heritage lands, which will soon be open to the public as part of a trail system. It will indeed be part of a very rich legacy of environmentalism and advocacy for nature left by Bruce Duncan.

Mr. Duncan's passion for the outdoors was exceeded only by his love for his family, and I ask members to join with me in extending our deepest condolences to Mr. Duncan's wife, Janet, and his children, James and Katie. Bruce Duncan was 60 years old.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery 10 recent university graduates who are interning at the House of Commons under the auspices of the Canadian parliamentary internship program. They are participating in a comparative study tour of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. Please join me in welcoming our guests.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 52, An Act to amend the Education Act respecting pupil learning to the age of 18 and equivalent learning and to make complementary amendments to the Highway Traffic Act / *Projet de loi 52, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation concernant l'apprentissage des élèves jusqu'à l'âge de 18 ans et l'apprentissage équivalent et apportant des modifications complémentaires au Code de la route*, the title of which is amended to read, "An Act to amend the Education Act respecting pupil learning to the age of 18 and equivalent learning / *Loi modifiant la Loi sur*

l'éducation concernant l'apprentissage des élèves jusqu'à l'âge de 18 ans et l'apprentissage équivalent."

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Shall the report be received and adopted?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1349 to 1354.

The Speaker: Mr. Delaney has presented the report of the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly with respect to Bill 52. All those in favour of having the report received and adopted will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Balkissoon, Bas	Duguid, Brad	Parsons, Ernie
Bartolucci, Rick	Duncan, Dwight	Peters, Steve
Bentley, Christopher	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Phillips, Gerry
Bradley, James J.	Hoy, Pat	Qaadri, Shafiq
Broten, Laurel C.	Jeffrey, Linda	Racco, Mario G.
Brownell, Jim	Kular, Kuldip	Ruprecht, Tony
Bryant, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Caplan, David	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Levac, Dave	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	Matthews, Deborah	Smitherman, George
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Delaney, Bob	Milloy, John	Watson, Jim
Dhillon, Vic	Mitchell, Carol	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Di Cocco, Caroline	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Zimmer, David

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Horwath, Andrea	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Hudak, Tim	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	Klees, Frank	Runciman, Robert W.
Chudleigh, Ted	Kormos, Peter	Tabuns, Peter
DiNovo, Cheri	MacLeod, Lisa	Tascona, Joseph N.
Dunlop, Garfield	Marchese, Rosario	Tory, John
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John	Yakabuski, John

The Deputy Clerk (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 42; the nays are 24.

The Speaker: The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

VISITORS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale-High Park): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I just wanted to introduce some guests that we have here today whom we should be proud to have in our midst. We have the Writers' Union of Canada. We have the American Federation of Musicians, representatives from the Canadian office; the Brantford Musicians Association, representatives there; ACTRA, many representatives, including Ms. Fiona Reid herself, Order of Canada and Dora winner. Thank you.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on estimates.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Mr. Hudak from the standing committee on estimates presents the committee's report as follows:

Pursuant to standing order 61(c), the following supplementary estimates (2006-07) are reported back to the House as they were not selected by the committee for consideration:

Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, vote 606, citizenship and immigration capital, \$1,000.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Pursuant to standing order 61(c), the report of the committee is deemed to be received and the supplementary estimates of the ministry named therein as not being selected for consideration by the committee are deemed to be concurred in.

VISITORS

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): I would like to acknowledge some special visitors. The grade 5 students from Mrs. De Lorenzo's and Ms. De Koe's classes at St. Bernard Catholic School are visiting the Legislature today.

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I would like to introduce the students, parents and staff from John Ross Robertson school in my riding—some of the best students from the best school in North America.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to put forth a motion without notice regarding the membership of the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I move that Mr. Delaney be added to the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding a committee time

change for the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I would like to make a correction on that last one. It's going to say the following, if the two opposition House leaders are listening to this. It should have read: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding a committee time change for the standing committee on finance and economic affairs.

The Speaker: Mr. Bradley is really asking for unanimous consent for a time change for the standing committee on finance and economic affairs. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I move that in addition to its regularly scheduled meeting times, the standing committee on finance and economic affairs be authorized to meet from January 22, 2007, to January 25, 2007, January 29, 2007, to February 1, 2007, and February 22 and February 23, 2007, for the purpose of pre-budget consultations.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I move that Mr. Ouellette and Mr. Miller exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Miller assumes ballot item 60 and Mr. Ouellette assumes ballot item 75, and that, pursuant to standing order 96(g), notice be waived for ballot item 60 and ballot item 62.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Tuesday, November 14, 2006, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1404 to 1409.

The Speaker: All those in favour will please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Phillips, Gerry
Balkissoon, Bas	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Barrett, Toby	Hudak, Tim	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bartolucci, Rick	Jeffrey, Linda	Racco, Mario G.
Bentley, Christopher	Klees, Frank	Ramal, Khalil
Bradley, James J.	Kular, Kuldip	Runciman, Robert W.
Broten, Laurel C.	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Brownell, Jim	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sandals, Liz
Bryant, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Scott, Laurie
Caplan, David	Levac, Dave	Sergio, Mario
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Matthews, Deborah	Smith, Monique
Chudleigh, Ted	Mauro, Bill	Smitherman, George
Colle, Mike	McNeely, Phil	Takhar, Harinder S.
Crozier, Bruce	Meilleur, Madeleine	Tascona, Joseph N.
Delaney, Bob	Miller, Norm	Tory, John
Dhillon, Vic	Milloy, John	Van Bommel, Maria
Di Cocco, Caroline	Mitchell, Carol	Watson, Jim
Duguid, Brad	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wilkinson, John
Duncan, Dwight	O'Toole, John	Witmer, Elizabeth
Elliott, Christine	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Parsons, Ernie	Yakubuski, John
Gravelle, Michael	Peters, Steve	Zimmer, David

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Tabuns, Peter
DiNovo, Cheri	Marchese, Rosario	
Horwath, Andrea	Prue, Michael	

The Deputy Clerk (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 66; the nays are 7.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

DIABETES

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'm pleased to rise today and mark the occasion of World Diabetes Day. Diabetes is a serious chronic disease that, if not managed properly and with care, can lead to long-term debilitating complications. Some 800,000 people have been diagnosed with diabetes in Ontario alone, and another 200,000 may be unaware that they have diabetes. Of that total of one million Ontarians, more than 300,000 people will develop debilitating complications. That's an awful lot of people potentially facing amputations, blindness, dialysis, cardiac surgery, heart attacks and strokes.

Our government is well aware of the ramifications of diabetes. That is why we currently provide some \$53 million in annual funding for diabetes programs and services. They are particularly focused on wellness, health promotion, diabetes education, early intervention and effective prevention of diabetes-related complications. We are doing our best to make diabetes care for everyone more than just a slogan. Health services like these are crucial in meeting our government's priority to keep people of all ages healthier. And it's thanks to health ser-

vices like these that we are successfully building a patient-centred chronic disease management and prevention system that not only responds to community needs but also brings better management to the delivery of care.

Our government is also providing \$18.1 million to enhance existing community diabetes education programs and to create 76 new programs as part of the government's chronic disease management strategy. This new funding represents an increase of more than 51% over last year. As well, the government recently added a new drug, Actos, to the province's list of medicines that will now be covered by the Ontario drug benefit program under Bill 102's new conditional listing mechanism.

Today, on World Diabetes Day, I'm proud to announce that the Ontario government will now cover 100% of the cost of insulin pumps and related supplies for children and youth age 18 and under, retroactive to April 1.

People with diabetes need to monitor their blood sugar levels daily. This takes self-discipline. It's especially challenging for children and youth to manage their own health when they'd rather be playing, spending time with friends or doing countless other activities that could be more fun. We want kids to be kids. That's why we wanted to provide this assistance. Insulin pumps will give more of them the freedom to live and to play. They will have one less thing to worry about.

An insulin pump is a small mechanical device about the size of a pager that is worn outside the body, often on a belt or in a pocket. It pumps insulin into the body through a narrow tube or very fine needle inserted under the skin. The pump is programmed to deliver insulin at a steady rate, based on the individual's needs. A top-up of insulin for meals or high blood sugar readings between meals can be manually programmed into the pump by the user.

We've designated funding of \$9.65 million in 2006-07 for the purchase of insulin pumps and ongoing related supplies for youth 18 years and under with type 1 diabetes. With this initiative, the government of Ontario recognizes the special needs of children with type 1 diabetes. Children are our first priority because they are at most risk for developing serious complications of type 1 diabetes, such as kidney disease, obesity, coronary disease and hypertension. Roughly 6,500 children in the province of Ontario have type 1 diabetes, and approximately 600 are currently using insulin pumps. With this new funding initiative, some 1,000 of the 6,500 children who have type 1 diabetes are expected to benefit.

The insulin pump program will be delivered through the 34 regional pediatric programs of the Network of Ontario Pediatric Diabetes Programs. The NOPDP provides pediatric diabetic services to more than 90% of children with diabetes in Ontario. Since its inception in 2001, network programs have served a total of more than 9,000 clients. With this new funding initiative, we have an opportunity to ensure that young people with diabetes receive the care they need to help them lead healthier, happier lives. Ontario is the first province in Canada to fund the purchase of insulin pumps.

I'd like to take this opportunity to acknowledge several groups, including the Canadian Diabetes Association, the Diabetes Hope Foundation and the juvenile diabetes association, who are here with us today on this important occasion. I'd especially like to single out Terry Anne Thomson, the coordinator for the Ontario Diabetes Action Partnership. Terry was key in raising awareness of this issue and engaging the government and other community groups to help lead us to where we are today with this new initiative.

I also want to acknowledge the efforts of my colleague from Thunder Bay-Superior North, Michael Gravelle. A year ago he introduced Bill 15, which had the same goal of increasing access to insulin pumps for individuals with diabetes. I know that all members of the House have been very supportive, and Mr. Gravelle has had a measurable impact in bringing awareness to this issue that the government first addressed last spring in our budget and that is being announced today.

The McGuinty government is expanding its program to help more people with diabetes improve their quality of life. We're strengthening a chronic disease management and prevention system that responds to patient and community needs. Today's initiative is another example of our plan to build a health care system that helps people to stay healthy, delivers good care when they need it and ensures that the health system will be there for their children and grandchildren.

SOUTIENS À L'EMPLOI

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

L'hon. Christopher Bentley (ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités): Investir dans les ressources humaines et leurs compétences est une des pierres angulaires de la stratégie économique du gouvernement McGuinty. Nous ne réaliserons pas notre potentiel en tant que province tant que chaque Ontarienne et Ontarien n'aura pas réalisé son propre potentiel. Aider la population et les entreprises de la province à trouver facilement et rapidement les services de formation et de soutien dont elles ont besoin est crucial si nous voulons réaliser ce potentiel.

We will not reach our potential as a province until every Ontarian reaches their potential. Assisting Ontarians and Ontario businesses to easily and effectively find the training and support services they need is essential if we are to reach that potential. Last week, I announced a new initiative which will help do exactly that. It's called Employment Ontario, Ontario's employment and training network.

1420

The McGuinty government has been investing substantially in skills and employment support services. In fact, this year, we'll spend approximately \$340 million on employment support services, including an increase of \$42 million over the past two years. This is in addition to

the substantial post-secondary investments we have been making.

Our investments include \$100 million this year in Employment Ontario's apprenticeship programs, including an expansion of the Ontario youth apprenticeship program, the pre-apprenticeship training program and the college co-op diploma apprenticeship program to help facilitate the route to an apprenticeship. This is in addition to the apprenticeship training tax credit and the apprenticeship scholarship and employer signing bonus, which both encourage employers to hire apprentices. These initiatives have helped keep us on track to meeting our goal of 26,000 new annual registrants to apprenticeship by 2007-08.

Literacy and academic upgrading are essential if we're to reach our economic potential. These programs give thousands of Ontarians a fresh opportunity to reach their potential. Studies consistently show that investing in literacy has a positive economic impact.

Employment Ontario's Job Connect services provide over 80 communities in Ontario with access to job information, employment workshops and one-on-one employment services. Our \$127-million investment in Job Connect includes a \$10-million increase to provide services to both youth and adults, as well as support for the opening of three new Job Connect centres with specialized services for newcomers. In fact, Ontario now has a substantial network of programs to help provide our province with the skilled workforce we need to make our economy strong.

About 470 different service providers in almost 900 locations will serve over half a million Ontarians with employment and training needs this year, including 76,000 employers. But this itself is a challenge.

What we haven't had in Ontario is a way to coordinate our services to make sure they are properly linked together. With so many providers of service in so many locations, where do you start? Are they properly coordinated? Does one lead effectively to another?

Employment Ontario is the place to start when you don't know where to start. It will help Ontarians make better use of the employment and training services we have by providing a single point of access to our newly coordinated network. Behind that, the services will be coordinated so that if you access a service which is not what you need, you will be referred to the one that you do need.

The existing services you are used to accessing and which perform such important work will continue. Employment Ontario will support them by providing a very important window onto those services, which should make them even more effective. We are building on the strengths of what's working.

Last week, I had the privilege of visiting two Job Connect centres, ACCES in Toronto and JVS in Markham, to launch Employment Ontario. This new initiative includes: a toll-free number, 1-800-387-5656, with expanding capabilities to help Ontarians get detailed information on the services they need in their local com-

munities; a new website with updated training and employment information and access to a database of our employment and training service providers in Ontario; new multilingual access to program information in 21 languages in addition to English and French; and a new name—Employment Ontario, Ontario's employment and training network—to give people and businesses a place to start when they don't know where to start.

These are important initiatives, but you should know that we are doing even more to plan for the future. That is why we signed the labour market development agreement and the labour market partnership agreement with the federal government. These two agreements will strengthen and add to our ability to help employers find the skilled workers they need or retrain the ones they have to help meet market opportunities and challenges. They will also help Ontarians find the extra skills and education that will give them the ability to achieve their goals.

Whether you are looking to add to your skills or rebuild them, Employment Ontario will help. Whether you have a job and might be looking for a better one, or are looking, Employment Ontario will help. It will help community groups and agencies refer their clients to the services they need to achieve their goals. It will also provide greater local input to planning, directing resources to where they can best help employers, workers, newcomers and people looking for work. Employment Ontario will also focus on meeting local needs to help all of our different regions participate in economic growth.

Employment Ontario will help Ontarians take advantage of the programs we have and ensure that those programs reach the people who need them. It will help every one of us reach our potential.

POLICE

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I rise today to pay tribute to the Police Association of Ontario and its members as they join us for their ninth annual legislative day here at Queen's Park. I'd like to acknowledge the presence of Bob Baltin, president of the PAO; chief administrative officer Bruce Miller; vice-president Brenda Lawson of the Ottawa Police Association; and Karl Walsh, the president of the Ontario Provincial Police Association.

As members know, the Police Association of Ontario is the official voice of Ontario's front-line police personnel. More than 30,000 police officers and civilians serving in police services throughout Ontario make up its membership. These are the people who put their lives on the line, day in and day out, to ensure that our province remains safe, secure and prosperous.

We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the members of the Police Association of Ontario for all they do for our community. They are on the side of families concerned about crime and safety, as is the McGuinty government. Working together, we have accomplished a lot in our fight to make Ontario safer and stronger.

Last November, for example, we introduced the Mandatory Blood Testing Act, 2006. This is an issue of great interest to the Police Association of Ontario, and I'm grateful to them for their input and significant contribution to the content of the bill. If passed, the Mandatory Blood Testing Act, 2006, would help resolve many of the issues that concern our police and other community safety workers and give them the peace of mind to go about their work with greater confidence.

The PAO was also instrumental in helping us develop the Private Security and Investigative Services Act, legislation that was passed by this House last December. The act calls for professional standards, advanced training, and licensing and better regulation of the private security business. We expect the regulations to be in place by the summer of 2007. These will lead to a more professional, modern industry in a very important sector of Ontario.

Another PAO contribution was its input in the development of the Safer Communities-1,000 Officers partnership program. Together, we have worked to make it a success.

The McGuinty government is working on many fronts to make the work of our front-line police officers more effective and efficient and to make our communities safer. The Law Enforcement and Forfeited Property Management Statute Law Amendment Act, 2005, proclaimed on August 1, 2006, will help police and communities combat the threat to community safety posed by illegal marijuana grow operations. The Mandatory Gunshot Wounds Reporting Act, passed by this Legislature last year, will require public hospitals and other prescribed health care facilities to report the names of people who are treated for gunshot wounds to their local police service. The \$51-million anti-gun violence initiative announced by Premier Dalton McGuinty in January 2006 is increasing the police services' ability to deal with organized crime. And we earmarked \$26 million for a new state-of-the-art operations centre for Toronto's guns and gangs task force.

While these initiatives are aimed at addressing the law enforcement issues faced by front-line police personnel, the McGuinty government has also addressed the PAO's concern with regard to retirement and pensions. We passed legislation that shifted responsibility for the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System from the province to the contributors and beneficiaries themselves. And over the next two years, we're providing \$10 million in funding to help cover the start-up costs of supplemental plans for police, fire and paramedic personnel, the start-up costs of the new sponsors corporation and for a facilitator to work with the sponsors corporation.

The McGuinty government is grateful for the hard work, honest feedback and healthy dialogue we have been able to maintain with the PAO. We will continue to do our part to ensure that our partnership with the PAO continues to thrive, and that Ontario is safer and more prosperous as a result.

Today, I am pleased to salute the dedicated and hard-working people who make up the Police Association of Ontario. I thank them for helping us make Ontario a stronger and safer place in which to live, work and play.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Responses?

1430

DIABETES

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I am very pleased to have the opportunity to recognize that today is World Diabetes Day. I'd like to recognize those individuals in the audience who have worked so hard to continue to raise awareness and bring to our attention the need for us to do what we can, obviously, to prevent and reduce the complications of diabetes.

Unfortunately, we know that diabetes is on the rise in almost every country throughout the world. It was in that light, in 1995, that our government actually introduced the diabetes strategy and also introduced the Pediatric Diabetes Initiative and a primary prevention framework for type 2 diabetes. So this announcement today builds on work that has been done in the past.

I know that at the prebudget hearings last year, my colleagues Toby Barrett and Tim Hudak brought forward an amendment that insulin pumps for children should be funded. I know that in the budget of this year there was an announcement of funding for these children. Then we had a reannouncement on October 20 of this year. I hope now, as we hear it for the third time, that the government will move ahead to provide the funding for these children, so that approximately 1,000 of the 6,500 children will be provided with this service.

It's very important that we do what we can today. It has a devastating impact on children and their families. Obviously today's announcement is certainly a step in the right direction. We need to continue to do what we can for those who continue to suffer.

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): In response to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, I have to wonder when members of this government will stop saying anything to get elected and make Ontario a more competitive place to do business.

This government continues to ignore the real issues faced by businesses and investors in Ontario. Moreover, they continue to ignore the reality of hundreds of thousands of families facing unemployment and loss of jobs in the manufacturing sector. When are they going to put an end to the punitive regulations, high energy prices and unfair property, income and business taxes that hinder jobs and investment in Ontario? It is, after all, this government's policies of broken promises, high costs and saying anything to get elected that most crush business investment in Ontario.

This government would do better to address their frivolous tax-and-spend policies and try to put an end to

the stories we hear about the closing of manufacturing plants in Ontario and the demise of manufacturing jobs, the backbone of Ontario's economy.

In the first three years of our government back in 1995 to 1998, 363,400 jobs were created, mostly by the private sector—about 90% of them by the private sector. That's 110,000 more jobs than the dismal record the Liberals have accomplished, with only 274,000 new jobs in this province. Our government was coming off the worst recession that we'd had in this province in 50 years, whereas this government was coming off a very buoyant economy, which they have managed to wrestle to the ground.

Ontarians are growing very weary of this government's policies of saying anything to get elected.

POLICE

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I too would like to welcome the Police Association of Ontario here today, on behalf of John Tory and the PC caucus. I did have an opportunity earlier to do a member's statement on the PAO lobby day, and I wanted to ask some of the members of the government, who have particularly stood in this House time and time again and blamed the federal government, week after week and day after day, about concerns they have with things that are happening in the province of Ontario.

But I can tell you that the Harper government has introduced 11 bills related to crime, and so far they've only had the opportunity to pass three. Why? Because the federal Liberal Party has obstructed at least eight of those bills. If this government can do anything to help the Police Association of Ontario and all police officers in this province, call on your federal cousins to quit obstructing that legislation and get on with passing it so that we can help families and we can make our communities safer here in the province of Ontario. I urge you to do that. Help the Police Association of Ontario to help all citizens of Canada and Ontario make this country better. You can pass that legislation and it will make it better. We finally have a federal government that cares about crime here in Canada.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): New Democrats join others in welcoming police officers and staff from the Police Association of Ontario to Queen's Park here yet once again, nine years successively. We always look forward to the opportunity to learn from police officers out there on the ground about the difficulties that police officers continue to face here in this province of Ontario.

It's remarkable that the minister can say what he did, citing, among other things, Bill 28. Yet the government sat on it for darned near a year. It was opposition members and opposition caucuses that had to drag the government kicking and screaming to the chamber to debate it.

Interjection.

Mr. Kormos: Over a year, and it still hasn't passed. The Minister of Community Safety stands and speaks

about Bill 28 as an indication of this government's commitment to the welfare of police officers. If that's an indication of your commitment to the welfare of police officers, cops in this province are in deep trouble.

You talk about guns and gangs. The fact is that the money that has been invested in the city of Toronto has driven guns and gangs out into smaller-town Ontario, and those police services are starved for the resources that they need to respond to the guns-and-gangs crisis that has been transferred into their municipalities.

Your Law Enforcement and Forfeited Property Management Statute Law Amendment Act proclaimed on August 1, 2006, I tell you, will do nothing to assist police officers in busting grow-ops. Police forces across this province have for the last year been very successful through their own hard work and diligence at busting grow-ops, no thanks to this government.

The fact is that police forces across this province, and municipalities across this province, need hard resources assisting them in the maintenance of adequate levels of policing. Most police services in this province are hard-pressed to even deliver core services, never mind deal with extraordinary demands placed on them.

Do you want to talk about needs? Talk about northern Ontario: communities like Attawapiskat and Peawanuck, the riding of Howard Hampton or of Gilles Bisson, Timmins-James Bay. I've been to some of those NPS services. They don't even know you exist, because you don't know they exist. They're operating police stations with cell doors that won't lock, snowmobiles without tracks, boats without motors. What an embarrassment for this government to talk about its support for police when you've abandoned police forces across the province, and especially in northern Ontario, where police forces have to deal with more and more difficult tasks and you ignore them. You pretend they don't exist. You may not even know they exist.

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I wanted to respond to Mr. Bentley's so-called new initiative. It includes a toll-free number, a new website, new multi-lingual access to program information and, lo and behold, a new name: Employment Ontario. Hardly Olympic stuff; hardly the stuff of innovation. All we can think of in terms of what the government is doing is that it's just like handing a newcomer or a worker a phone book and saying, "Here, look it up." Hardly Olympic.

But if you looked at what Quebec has done, Minister, you might pick something new and innovative. Quebec did something very innovative 10 years ago. It's An Act Fostering the Development of Manpower Training. It was adopted in 1995. The act reached, in 2005, all employers with a payroll superior to \$1 million a year. The goal is to improve manpower qualification through increased investment in manpower training. A concerned employer must spend, in training of its personnel, at least 1% of its payroll each year.

Furthermore, a fund was established, independent from the state, under the name Fonds national de formation de la main-d'oeuvre, sometimes labelled the partners' fund. When an employer doesn't reach the 1% minimum, he must pay the difference to the Ministry of Revenue, and this sum is redirected to the fund. Many institutional developments were initiated by Quebec social partners with the support of this fund.

This is bold; this is new. It's similar to what they did with the status-of-the-artist legislation 10 years ago. Yes, it needs improvement, but they were the first to do that as well and the first to offer \$7-a-day child care. That's innovation. I would love to debate stuff like that rather than, once again, another announcement of a government website and hotline that is supposed to solve the complex and challenging problems faced by newcomers and others looking for training and apprenticeship opportunities. That's not innovation, Minister. Sorry.

1440

DAVID MOUNSEY

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I believe we have unanimous consent for all parties to speak up to five minutes to recognize a fallen police officer.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Bradley has asked for unanimous consent for all parties to speak up to five minutes in recognizing a fallen police officer. Agreed? Agreed.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): On October 14, 2006, Constable David Mounsey, a well-known and well-respected member of the Huron county detachment of the Ontario Provincial Police, sustained critical injuries in an on-duty automotive accident. Constable Mounsey, who was also a volunteer firefighter in the community of Blyth, was responding to a call for service at the time of the accident.

I'm saddened to inform the House that on Monday, November 13, after spending nearly a month in a coma, Constable Mounsey succumbed to those injuries and passed away peacefully. David is survived by his partner, Brenda Carey, who is also an active member of the Huron detachment of the OPP. He is also survived by one child, Ryan, as well as two stepchildren, Wyatt and Dalton, and a brother in England, John.

David started his career in law enforcement as a member of the Royal Air Force in Britain before becoming an active constable of the Ontario Provincial Police on April 24, 1998, in the Haldimand-Norfolk OPP detachment. David transferred to the Huron county OPP detachment in 2001, where he served until the time of his passing.

David was also a committee member of the OPP's western region ceremonial unit.

In addition to his duties as a provincial police constable, David was an active volunteer on the Blyth fire department since 2005. David had been a very active

member and a tremendous asset to the department since his arrival.

David and his partner, Brenda, have both recently returned from running the 46K Royal Victoria marathon in Victoria, BC. David had undertaken this incredibly physical commitment not for personal gratification, but as a means of raising money for the Blyth fire department to purchase a defibrillator machine for their public service. I would also like the House to know that by collecting from local sponsors and completing the gruelling race, David and his partner were successful in their mission. This is a testament to his amazing commitment not only to the fire department and the police department, but also to the safety of his community.

This is a man who will be truly missed by his colleagues and friends alike. David's professionalism and his bravery will be honoured with a full police funeral to be held in the town of Wingham on Friday, November 17, at 1 p.m. This will be a celebration of David's life and the immense impact that one man can have on his community.

This is yet another example of the risks that are inherent in the jobs of all of our emergency service professionals and how these men and women often make the greatest sacrifice to keep our communities safe. When an officer of the law loses his life while carrying out the duties of his office, it is a loss felt by all of those in our communities. We will honour and remember their devotion to the public good, and we must not take their sacrifices for granted. I would request a moment of silence to show respect for Constable Mounsey and his family for their great loss, and I would request this moment at the end of all tributes.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): It is an honour to stand here today and join all members of the House, on behalf of our leader, John Tory, and the PC caucus, as we pay tribute to the life of Ontario Provincial Police Constable David Mounsey.

Constable Mounsey passed away yesterday morning as the result of an on-duty accident that occurred on October 14 of this year. I didn't know Constable Mounsey, but I know he is survived by his spouse, Brenda, and their three children: Ryan, Wyatt and Dalton. He began his career with the Royal Air Force in Britain before joining the OPP. He showed his pride of the OPP as a committed member of the western region ceremonial unit.

The statement "Heroes in life, not death" is the wording that is seen on the police memorial wall here at Queen's Park and on lapel pins that are worn by fellow officers and citizens following the death of an officer. I know a number of the officers here today, on lobby day, have these pins on. They'll continue to wear them up until the funeral, and next year as well on the wall of honour day, on Police Memorial Day here at Queen's Park, the first Sunday in May, when David Mounsey's name will be placed on that wall of honour.

I just wanted to point out a couple of things. I actually met a police officer in a Remembrance Day service on the weekend and he had one of these pins on. I said, "I'm surprised you have that pin on today." He said, "Well, I

wear these myself during Remembrance Day services because I feel the remembrance of my colleagues whom I may have known in the past with the Ontario Provincial Police or the police services." During that discussion, I was actually paying a compliment to the police services because I thought what a wonderful job they had done on Remembrance Day services throughout our province, but particularly in my riding where they kept traffic control and patrol to a minimum and kept the noise down so we could pay tribute to our veterans on this very special day.

Now during Remembrance Day services we see many police officers taking part, because they are people who are dedicating their lives as well. It's not war but, I tell you, they're protecting the rights and freedoms that we have here in Ontario. I just want to say, on behalf of our leader, John Tory, thank you to his family and to the community.

I wanted to close with a quote from the newly appointed OPP Commissioner, Julian Fantino. It says, "The men and women of the OPP and the entire policing family are mourning the tragic loss of a fellow officer and a friend. Constable David Mounsey was an excellent, dedicated police officer. We'll miss him very much."

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Every day, police officers keep our families and communities safe. Every day when they put on their uniforms and say goodbye to their own families, they do so knowing that they may put themselves in harm's way in order to protect all of us. Today, we acknowledge and remember a police officer who has made the ultimate sacrifice.

On Monday, Ontario Provincial Police Constable David Mounsey died in hospital. Constable Mounsey succumbed to injuries he sustained one month ago when his police cruiser skidded off the road on the way to a transport truck rollover.

As we've heard, Constable Mounsey led a distinguished career, first in the Royal Air Force in Britain and then with Ontario Provincial Police detachments in Haldimand-Norfolk and Huron county and with the OPP western region ceremonial unit.

Today, we join with the people we represent from across Ontario in mourning this loss. We thank Constable Mounsey for his dedication, his courage and his good work in keeping our communities safe, and now for his sacrifice. We extend our most sincere condolences to his wife, Brenda, his children and to all family, friends and colleagues.

The Speaker: I would ask members and our guests to rise for a moment of silence in memory of Constable David Mounsey.

The House observed a moment's silence.

1450

ORAL QUESTIONS

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. Premier, three months ago, to

great fanfare, as usual, the government announced the provincial-municipal fiscal and service delivery review. As happens so frequently with this government, nothing has happened since. We haven't heard a peep of any kind whatsoever, and three months have passed: nothing from the Premier, nothing from the minister; no terms of reference; no membership of the review committee. No announcements of any kind, just the standard line: Don't take any responsibility. Blame somebody else. Blame Ottawa. Don't do anything.

When are you going to act? When is this review going to get under way? When are we going to start to find out how people can have input on this as local governments prepare to approach their budget season yet again?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I want to thank the leader of the official opposition for the question. I infer from the question that he is very much in support of our initiative and that he believes we should continue to work with Ontario municipalities and to strike the very distinctive chord that we have struck during the course of our mandate, which is to treat our municipal colleagues as genuine partners and to have a shared sense of responsibility when it comes to meeting the needs of our shared constituents.

I know that the minister will shortly provide my colleague with more answers, but let me tell you something about some of the stuff we have been able to do together.

We have a new memorandum of understanding in place that ensures that the Association of Municipalities of Ontario is consulted on changes that affect municipalities. We have put in place a two-cent gas tax transfer to our municipalities for them to invest in their public transit. Those are real, practical and tangible and demonstrate the good relationship that we have with Ontario municipalities.

Mr. Tory: We support the initiative but don't support the timetable in two respects. The first is that you announced from the beginning it was going to take 18 months to get this work done, and the second, which makes it even worse, is you have now wasted three months of the 18. I hope they're not cumulative, because that would make it 21 months to get on with it. We want this review and we want it to happen fast, because there are urgent problems in the local communities across the province. We think that when you appoint a review like that and let it stretch out 18 months, it looks like you're trying to kill the bad headlines and put it, of course, after the election.

On September 28, 2006, the House passed a resolution moved by the member for Oxford that states that the review is taking too long. The resolution reads, in part, that the review "is needlessly drawn out and that a full review to balance the delivery of services with the ability to pay should be completed much more expeditiously, in order to avoid hitting Ontario taxpayers with unsustainable property tax hikes or significant reductions in service." Will the Premier keep his promise to the muni-

cipalities and keep his promise to respect the will of this House and speed up the review process? Get on with it.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I know the leader of the official opposition will want to remind himself that the good work we did with the city of Toronto took us about two years. That's for one, albeit significantly large, urban centre. That took us two years. We now want to address all municipalities throughout the province, about eight million other people living in those municipalities: big, small and in between. We think it's important to take the appropriate amount of time to get it right.

I note in passing that when it came to the City of Toronto Act, which we think is a significant piece of legislation that will help strengthen the city of Toronto, the leader of the official opposition voted against that bill. We will continue to move in the appropriate direction, working with our partners to ensure that we ultimately strengthen them and their cause.

Mr. Tory: The City of Toronto Act definitely had some steps forward, but it didn't deal with the fundamental issue we're talking about here, which is actually getting on with some reform to the finances so they will have the resources to fix some of the problems they have. The fact is, you didn't deal with that, notwithstanding you started talking about it years ago.

Municipalities have passed resolutions calling for you to expedite this process; 100 municipalities have written to us indicating that they think you can and should expedite this process and get on with it and take a lot less than the 18 months you're taking to postpone this until after the election. You're ignoring those 100 municipalities in taking this 18-month delay that you can't really explain. Every single one of these communities, and more, agrees that your dithering and delay are making things worse for them, and instead of acting you're sitting on your hands. Will you listen to the scores of municipalities—100 and more—that have written so far, saying you should speed this process up, get on with it and get on with the reform and helping them out? Are you going to do that?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: A few points in response: First of all, the Conservative Party should recognize that the reason we're getting involved in this is to clean up their mess. That's number one. We're trying to find a way to correct the downloading foisted upon Ontario municipalities.

Secondly, we've been doing much in the interim. In addition to that memorandum of understanding, we have in place this new gas tax to support public transit. In our last budget there was Move Ontario, a \$1.2-billion initiative supporting roads, bridges and the like. We have put in place 14,000 new child care spaces. We're up-loading public health costs and land ambulance costs and, yes, we are pursuing this review of services together with our municipal partners. Yes, we will continue to take the correct amount of time to get it right. We'll do it in a collaborative way, a co-operative way, something that is relatively unknown to the former government.

JUSTICES OF THE PEACE

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier again. They just want you to get on with it, that's all, just get on with it and all these other projects that are written down in disappearing ink.

Let's move to another one. It's the same kind of thing. This is another concern to the municipalities: the shortages of justices of the peace. In July 2003 there were 323 justices of the peace in Ontario. Today there are 298, and that includes five you are going to appoint tomorrow. Forty per cent of those will be retiring within 10 years. The result of this shortage is delays in the court system, court backlogs and the loss of municipal revenues.

Today you said you would love to be able to dole out more money to the municipalities. The fact is, they would be really grateful if you'd stop handcuffing them and cutting off the source of revenue they have today. In refusing to deal with this file, you've cost \$700,000 to Hamilton, \$765,000 to Niagara and \$39 million to Ottawa in lost revenue, and then you voted against a PC motion to allow access to the MTO database so people can track down those who haven't paid. Why did you refuse this reasonable request to give the municipalities access to this information?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Attorney General.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): Why did you block a bill that could have had JPs sitting in those courtrooms a year ago? We had a bill before this Legislature that would have allowed us to put JPs in those courts to assist those traffic courts in a timely fashion, and the only reason we didn't have that done a year ago is because this official opposition decided to obstruct it. So I say to the member, we got the JPs into the courts; we got the bill passed. Why did you try to obstruct that bill?

Mr. Tory: The member for St. Paul's will have plenty of opportunity to ask questions from over here soon enough. The fact is that the minister didn't bring the bill forward for months, he brought forward an omnibus bill dealing with four or five different subjects, and the real facts are 323 JPs in 2003 and 298 today.

It's not just about money not collected. Municipalities are shelling out big bucks for your failure: a \$50-million bill for courthouse security and for courthouses that are sitting empty.

A story from the Port Hope Evening Guide said, "When one court was cancelled without sufficient notice, five police officers on overtime showed up to participate. The town ended up paying 20 hours of overtime to officers who were probably in court about two minutes."

You congratulate yourself for bringing 21 JPs out of retirement. This is the same government that voted down an amendment in the very bill you talk about to extend the retirement age to 75, as recommended by the association of JPs. Why didn't you pass that amendment if you were so concerned about getting JPs into the courts?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: The government has appointed 45 new justices of the peace since we took office. When the

Conservative government was in power, between 1995 and 1997, do you know how many JPs they appointed? Did they appoint 45? No. Did they appoint 14? No. They appointed zero justices of the peace.

In addition to the JPs who have been appointed and in addition to putting into place the per diem JPs who will deal with ongoing caseload, this government will not take any lectures from that party when it comes to ensuring that we have access to justice in the province of Ontario.

1500

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tory: Here are the numbers. For all your great claims, here are the numbers: 323 JPs in 2003; 298 today, including five tomorrow. I'm even crediting you with the five you're going to do tomorrow. That doesn't sound like much of an improvement to me.

During the very same Bill 14 committee hearings, Jane Moffatt, the vice-president of the Prosecutors' Association of Ontario, said the central east region had lost a total of 12 JPs since 2004. That's all on your watch, by the way. You've yet to fill half of those vacancies.

The result is, as Brian Rosborough of AMO told the justice committee: "...police officers waiting sometimes for hours to meet with a justice of the peace on warrant issues. This waiting time results in fewer police officers on the street, a diversion of police resources and added costs for municipalities."

My question is this: Why is this government dithering on this file? Why has the number of JPs gone down on your watch, up to and including today? Will the Premier commit to appointing the JPs that are needed in communities across the province to alleviate this crisis? Will you get on with it?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: The government has got on with it, and we could have gotten on with it a lot earlier if that party hadn't blocked Bill 14.

Contrary to what the member said, the president of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police provided credit to the government for passing Bill 14 as an important step in modernizing the procedures for prosecuting provincial offences through the available technology. In fact, what we've done is update the traffic court system in terms of the evidence, the prosecution, and the justices of the peace who have been appointed. It's the most significant update to the justice of the peace system, I'm told by the Chief Justice, since 1327. We could have gone on with it a lot earlier and we could have got it done in 2005 if that party had not dragged its feet.

So I say again to the member, we've got on with it all right, and we could have got on with it a lot quicker and a lot—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): We've heard of the McGuinty government blaming other

governments, but reaching back to 1327 is something none of us, I think, can understand.

A year ago in October, the McGuinty government signed a deal with Bruce Power—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I need to know who the question is to.

Mr. Hampton: Oh, this is to the Premier.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Hampton: —a private nuclear company. At the time, your energy minister boasted, "This agreement will ensure fair prices and the capacity to meet Ontario's future energy needs."

Premier, do you stand by those comments today? Do you still believe your Bruce Power deal is a good deal for Ontario consumers?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): The Bruce Power deal was signed. In fact, it wasn't me who said that; it was the outside people we brought in to assist us—CIBC World Markets—who said, in fact, it was a "fair deal." It was something called a fairness letter, which very clearly outlined that in the view of the outside body that was advising the government at the time, this would be a good deal.

Just to be certain, I then asked the Provincial Auditor to review the deal, something we felt was appropriate, and sent the deal over to the auditor. The auditor is continuing his review of the deal, and I look forward to his input and advice on that deal. Suffice it to say, the power at Bruce represents an opportunity for us to keep the lights on in Ontario, something we think is very, very important.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: This is the McGuinty government's confidential document dealing with the electricity transmission problem. This is the document the McGuinty government tried to hide from the people of Ontario for the last year, and now we know why you were trying to hide it: because it explains that you don't have the transmission capacity to carry the additional electricity that Bruce Power is supposed to produce starting in 2009. Then it says that if the transmission capacity isn't there by 2009, you'll have to pay Bruce nuclear penalty fees of \$460 million a year, while hydro consumers get no additional electricity.

My question to the Premier is, how is paying half a billion dollars for no electricity a good deal for Ontario's hydro consumers?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: I think the power authority released a document last week that said there are a number of solutions that will have the adequate transmission to get the power out of Bruce by 2009. The power authority, an independent body, feels that's adequate; we feel it's adequate. We feel the deal is fair, we feel it's the appropriate deal, and it is the proper way to proceed.

As I say, I rely on the Ontario Power Authority in that regard, and they're very clear in their document today that there are a number of ways, and I look forward to the

member's support then, because that transmission is important for wind power as well. So I know he'll work hard with us to make sure that transmission is on stream by 2009 in order to free up the wind resources that are very present in Bruce county.

Mr. Hampton: We'll deal with the Ontario Power Authority document in a few minutes, but this is the government's own document. It paints a very telling picture. The government put together this sweetheart deal with Bruce nuclear, a rush deal, and on page 5 it explains that Ontario should build a reliable transmission line to carry the additional power, but since that new transmission line won't be ready by 2009, it points out that you're going to duct tape the existing system, at an additional cost of \$260 million. So half a billion dollars for electricity that people won't be able to use, and then a further \$260 million for a Red Green duct tape job.

I ask the Premier this: How is that a good deal for Ontario's electricity consumers?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: Again, the amount of money and the temporary changes will remain in place. It's not like they'll be shut down when the permanent line is brought on. That additional capacity is needed to help bring wind power out of the Bruce county area, which is in addition to the nuclear power that's coming out. It's an important investment, in our view, one that we think will pay dividends to the people of Ontario, the province of Ontario. Again, the power authority has indicated, and we support the view of the power authority, that in fact there will be adequate transmission to get the power out of Bruce county—not just the nuclear power but, just as importantly, the wind power. I know the leader of the third party will work with us as we bring those new wind opportunities online, as we need that new transmission. I take this as an indication of his support, that he'll support the government as it moves forward with new transmission capacity out of Bruce county.

Mr. Hampton: To the Premier: I don't think anyone is going to support a deal where Ontario Hydro consumers could end up paying \$800 million and get no additional electricity. This is the Ontario Power Authority report that was just released. When you read this report, it makes it very clear that a permanent transmission line is needed to get the electricity out of the Bruce Peninsula to the greater Toronto area, but it also makes it clear that that new transmission line will be delayed until 2011 or 2012, possibly—not ready in 2009. It makes it clear that your duct tape interim solution is acceptable only as a short-term stopgap measure.

I say to the Premier, you signed this sweetheart deal with Bruce Power. It could well end up costing \$800 million more for consumers and get no power. Do you still agree this is a good deal for consumers?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: Let's be clear; let me just re-emphasize: Yes, you're repeating what the Ontario Power Authority, the ISO and Hydro One said last week, that in fact, to get the permanent line, it will be 2011. If you read earlier in that document, you'll see that they

recommended a number of relatively easy changes to the existing transmission infrastructure that will allow power not only from nuclear but from wind power in Bruce county—and, by the way, to our friends in rural Ontario, from anaerobic digest; there's a number of farm opportunities in the area to get that power out of there.

1510

That figure of \$800 million you're quoting is just hokey. You're twisting the numbers, you're taking them out of context and you're adding things up that shouldn't be added up. I would suggest you read the documents and the comments of the experts. I don't pretend to be an expert, but I know this: We have the ability to get the power out by 2011 and we have an interim solution at 2009. That investment in the interim solution will continue to pay dividends beyond 2011. Therefore, unlike—

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. Supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: Here's the reality: Nuclear power options have a long history in Ontario of massive cost overruns, but this one will be a first. The hard-working women and men of Ontario are out \$260 million for duct tape aid to the transmission system, but even if the duct tape system is there, it still may not be able to carry the electricity, in which case they pay another \$460 million and get no electricity. This is bizarre, in anybody's estimation, and no amount of trying to hide it from the public is going to work.

I say to the Premier again, do you think this is a good deal for the electricity consumers of Ontario, when they could be on the hook for close to \$800 million in costs and get no additional hydroelectricity?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: Again, I will stress that in the opinion of CIBC World Markets, which we engaged for an independent review, it is a fair deal. There are risks, and we acknowledge that; there are risks in any of these projects. I look forward to the Leader of the Opposition working with us as we bring on new transmission at various parts of the province to access wind, hydroelectric opportunities. I hope he won't be opposing those kinds of opportunities, because they are important. I acknowledge there's risk in this. That's why we sent the deal to the Provincial Auditor, and I look forward to his comments on the deal. But the greater risk is if we do what his government did and don't address the fundamental challenges before this province. We were facing blackouts, pure and simple. This deal is a risky deal by any standard, and it will be. But it's a fair deal, it's one that will have the power to markets on time and at the cost outlined, and we believe it is the appropriate course of action to pursue in all the circumstances.

Mr. Hampton: The Minister of Energy says that this is a risky deal but a good deal. This is like a general manager of a hockey team putting out lots of money for a washed-up player, and then when he realizes he's washed up, he goes out and pays even more for a temporary player and says to the public, "This is a good deal." There's \$460 million at risk right off the top and then a further \$240 million at least at risk, and the people of Ontario potentially stand to get no additional electricity. I

say to the Premier, how do you justify these kinds of sweetheart deals with your private electricity friends when the hydro ratepayers of Ontario could end up paying a bundle?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: Again, I say to the leader of the third party, first of all, that his numbers are not in touch with reality. They're just taken out of context and mixed together. There will be adequate transmission capacity to get the power out of Bruce once the refurbished reactors are online. It's an appropriate deal. Again, we asked CIBC World Markets for an independent fairness letter, and they provided that. In addition, I've asked the Provincial Auditor for his view on the deal. It's important that we move forward with this development. It's important that the transmission come online by 2011. By 2009, according to the Ontario Power Authority, the Independent Electricity System Operator and Hydro One, we will have adequate transmission resources to get the power from Bruce. It will continue to serve Ontario and make sure we keep the lights on throughout the province.

OTTAWA LIGHT RAIL PROJECT

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean–Carleton): My question is for the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. This weekend my constituents in Nepean–Carleton and throughout all of Ottawa were scared. They were contemplating the fact that you are going to take away \$200 million for a rapid transit expansion. On Friday afternoon, three days before the municipal election, this Liberal government issued a letter to city officials regarding the proposed north-south light rail project. Former Mayor Chiarelli claimed this letter meant the province would veto any light rail plan but his and that the \$200 million committed by the province was in jeopardy. Ottawa's recent municipal election was a referendum on the former mayor's light rail project, and Larry O'Brien, who is not firmly committed to the proposed light rail project, became the new mayor of Ottawa.

My question: Will the minister clarify the former mayor's comments and will the Ottawa council have the same flexibility it did in 2004 when there was a three-level Liberal McGuinty-Martin-Chiarelli—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. The question has been asked.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I think the member has a future in comedy. This government has signed in good faith, but it has been her mentor, Treasury Board President John Baird, who has thrown a monkey wrench into it.

I want to read from Susan Sherring—you must know Susan from Ottawa: "So it seems Progressive Conservative leader John Tory is 'disappointed' ... 'threatening' to withdraw transit funding if Bob Chiarelli isn't elected.

"Well, I'm disappointed Tory can't read," says Susan Sherring. "For the life of me, I can't understand why some believe it's okay for Treasury Board President John Baird to go back on his word, and withhold federal fund-

ing, and yet Tory is up in arms because the province says it will honour its commitment.

"Near as we can tell, Tory is upset because the provincial Liberals are keeping their word."

Shame on John Tory, and shame on you for bringing this farce to this House.

Ms. MacLeod: Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Minister of Finance, I'm not going to warn you again.

Ms. MacLeod: I too wish life was like a box of chocolates, but the minister can't Gump this up. That \$200 million is important to the people of Ottawa, and I'll tell you one thing: At least John Baird did the honourable thing and he has let the new Ottawa council keep the \$200 million that the federal government committed. Right now, CFRA is reporting 12 of the 23 councillors will vote against the light rail project as it is today. According to his website, the new mayor is committed to negotiating with Siemens and PLC to implement a six-month delay to allow the city to provide—

Interjections.

Ms. MacLeod: Mr. Speaker, I can't hear over them.

The Speaker: Minister of Economic Development, I'm not going to warn you again either.

Ms. MacLeod: I'm going to make it simple for the minister: The mayor wants to provide realistic alternatives to what he calls "the clear failings and deficits in the current plan." But this Liberal government, in its letter of November 10, told Ottawa voters that any contemplation of other potential alternative investments would be inconsistent.

The so-called referendum on light rail was won by over 45% by Larry O'Brien yesterday, who ran on alternatives to the rapid transit plan, a plan that this government's own letter states would be inconsistent. Will the minister commit to keeping his government's promise in 2004 of \$200 million for infrastructure funding in Ottawa, yes or no?

1520

Hon. Mr. Caplan: My, oh my, Speaker. On April 21, 2005, I had the great privilege of signing a memorandum of understanding with the city of Ottawa and the federal government. Unfortunately, it is the federal President of the Treasury Board, John Baird, who has mused aloud and seemingly thrown a monkey wrench into this. The province, of course, has been very clear. We have clarified with the city of Ottawa that we believe in and stand behind our agreement of April 21, 2005.

Now, this member could help. This member could write to John Baird. This member could talk to her colleagues, her kissing cousins in Ottawa, and get them to honour their agreements, which they seem to have a lot of trouble doing—certainly the Canada-Ontario agreement that my colleague the finance minister talked about in this House, which it looks like Prime Minister Harper and Treasury Board President John Baird are renegeing on. This member could help and make sure that—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

HOMELESSNESS

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Today, in the little Church of the Holy Trinity, just behind the Eaton Centre, we were all reminded of the tragedy of homelessness, because this afternoon they posted the 500th name added to the Toronto homeless memorial. Sadly, the numbers have actually gone up in the past three years. These deaths are preventable; you know they are preventable. Toronto's homeless must be provided with the housing that they need.

Mr. Minister, I have a very simple question: What is your plan to immediately house these homeless so that they do not die at the rate of one per week on our streets?

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the member for the question. As the member well knows, as he's heard in this House on numerous occasions, this government signed an agreement with the federal government a year ago last April to put up \$602 million worth of affordable housing in this city and in this province. We're working at it. We've got a housing allowance program that helps people of low income with their housing needs. We've got an affordable housing program, where people are moving into affordable housing units across this province. Some 128 projects have been approved, and have either been built or are in the planning process. We have a rent bank program that has helped over 5,000 individuals in an emergency situation in this province who need help. They've been given the money so that they can stay in their own home. There's a lot of work to be done, but—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Supplementary.

Mr. Prue: Mr. Minister, your government is quick to make these announcements and re-announcements, but not very quick to actually build the homes; 1,653 are actually occupied, by your own figures. This amounts to only a tiny fraction of the 20,000 units plus the 6,000 units of supportive housing that you promised in the last election. Your government has \$400 million set aside in an account that you are not spending on the housing that is so desperately needed. We want you to build that truly affordable housing, and we want it built now.

My question again to you: When will you keep your promise to build the 20,000 units of affordable housing and the 6,000 units of supportive housing and keep our people from dying on the streets?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: Once again, for years and years prior to our government taking over in October 2003, absolutely nothing happened, both federally and provincially, as far as affordable housing is concerned. We've made a good start. Is there more work to be done? Absolutely. In addition to the programs I talked about earlier, we've got an additional 3,500 units where people are getting rent supplements now that weren't available to them in October 2003. That means people are getting subsidized rents so that vulnerable individuals with

limited means can have a roof over their head. We realize a lot of work has to be done.

As far as the money in the trust fund is concerned, that money is there, we're looking at various program options, and they will be announced as soon as we're in a position to do so.

ALIMENTATION EN ÉLECTRICITÉ

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

M. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): La question supplémentaire va être posée par le député de Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh.

Ma question s'adresse au ministre de l'Énergie. Plus tôt aujourd'hui, vous avez annoncé la signature d'un accord entre Hydro One et Hydro-Québec qui permettra à l'Ontario d'avoir accès à jusqu'à 1250 mégawatts d'électricité propre et renouvelable.

Renewable power is something that my constituents strongly support. They are constantly telling me that they'd like to see the government invest more in hydro and wind and solar. Today's announcement is a perfect example of how we are listening to them. This is in stark contrast to the previous governments, who either did nothing to bring new renewable sources online, like the Conservatives, or governments who cancelled important renewable projects, like the NDP.

Minister, when can Ontarians expect to start benefiting from this announcement? What does this mean for Ontario's energy system and its economy?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): I'd like to thank the member and all his colleagues from the Ottawa region who helped so much in making this a reality. We're very grateful.

This morning we announced the signing of a deal that will create another interconnection between Ontario and Quebec and increase our import and export capacity with Quebec by almost 100% over the next three years. That will allow us to import clean, renewable hydroelectric power from Quebec, and by extension we will be able to export power to Quebec on an as-needed basis.

This is an important development for Ontario. It lessens our dependence on foreign power, gives us more capacity, creates jobs in the Ottawa region and helps us to clean up the environment. We think it's important. It's a win-win-win: a cleaner environment, it's good for Quebec, it's good for Ontario and, most importantly, it's good for Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Supplementary, the member for Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh.

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): Minister, renewable power isn't the only energy-related issue my constituents bring up. They also bring up energy conservation, because they know, like I do, that it's cheaper to save a megawatt than to build a megawatt.

I often hear the member from Kenora–Rainy River talk about conservation and criticize our government's action on the file, although I find it quite rich that he does so after his party voted against the Energy Conservation Responsibility Act. Minister, could you clarify for the House and for my constituents what Ontario is doing to reduce energy consumption?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: The Canadian Energy Efficiency Alliance gave this government a B+—that's up from a D average under the previous government—and they expect we'll be the leader in Canada by this time next year. That's because we are committed to conservation. More than 500 programs are going on across the province now. Just some examples of how we're saving: 57,000 megawatt hours in home conservation projects; Toronto Hydro's summer challenge, 50,000 megawatt hours, a project that we have just expanded province-wide; London Hydro's fridge retirement program, 12,000 megawatt hours; and the list goes on and on.

We are on target to meet our government's own internal conservation target of 10%, and we are on target, according to the conservation bureau, to meet the 5% peak demand reduction by 2007 that we set out. This government is committed to a cleaner environment. It's the first government in Ontario's history that's actually done something—

The Speaker: Thank you.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): I have a question for the Minister of Health. We've had brought to our attention today the case of Ms. Crystal Caligiuri. She's in the Markham Stouffville Hospital emergency room, where she has been since Sunday night. She's on a stretcher there. She has been on a stretcher since she's been there. She's suffering from multiple myeloma, which has spread to her liver. Her liver has shut down; her stomach has apparently shut down; her belly is distended by a foot. There is no bed for her. She can't go on chemotherapy, so they have her on a morphine drip. She has been on that drip on a stretcher in the emergency room in the Markham Stouffville Hospital for more than 24 hours now. She's not eating or drinking. She's literally lying there dying on a stretcher.

I wonder how this can be, in the province of Ontario, and I wonder, after you came here with the kinds of announcements and pronouncements and advertisements that you've had, how you can explain this and what you have to say to Ms. Caligiuri and to her family.

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Firstly, what I would say to any family member in the province of Ontario is that the circumstances with respect to our health care system are a shared challenge.

The honourable member doesn't like the cut and thrust of partisan debate in here, and he asked me a torqued question like that. How could it come to this? Your party cut acute—

1530

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Oh, now they don't like it. They can bring the hard question, but they can't even bear to address the fundamental accountability that was, for eight and a half years, their reputation and record.

Acute care beds—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The member for Waterloo–Wellington needs to come to order, The Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: To address the circumstances on point: We had a situation in Ontario where acute care beds were cut by 22%. This is a capacity challenge. We're in the midst of a very significant rebuild. The Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal can speak to that. Markham-Stouffville is a community where a new hospital is coming. In fact, the 905 part of the GTA will see 45% of all the new bed construction that's ongoing.

We've worked very hard to support hospice and provide the necessary support for people—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Tory: The woman in question, Ms. Caligiuri, has been there since Sunday night. She's got multiple myeloma. Parts of her body are shutting down. She's on a morphine drip. They can't get her on chemotherapy because they can't get her a bed, which is a problem we hear about over and over again. When I asked you how it's come to this, the best you can tell me after you've been in government for more than three years now—you've had three different reports on emergency rooms, you've been collecting the health tax, which is a tax you promised you wouldn't bring in, for more than three years, had all that money, and all you can do is blame some previous government.

What are you prepared to do for Ms. Caligiuri and for her family? What are you prepared to do for this woman, who is lying on a stretcher—not even a bed—in the emergency room of the Markham Stouffville Hospital, other than get up and make this kind of statement? What are you prepared to do? You are the Minister of Health. What are you prepared to do for her and her family specifically?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: What I'm not prepared to do, for the point of the honourable member's excitement, is to bring an individual case like this forward. It dictates that people who are involved in making hundreds of thousands of clinical decisions every day make the very best ones that are possible in the circumstances. There are challenging circumstances like this—nobody pretends about those—and they have existed on the watch of all political parties.

On point, the honourable member asks about the premium. He proposes to cut it. If the circumstances are challenging now, when we've made a \$2.5-billion investment annually in health care as a result of the greater contribution of the people of Ontario, which he proposes to cut, how will that improve circumstances?

We're building new bed capacity. We've enhanced our capacity to support. We're building new regional cancer centres. We're building beds back into the system. We're creating better community supports. We brought a home hospice and residential hospice program to provide support for people at the end of their life. The point is that we believe in public health care. We're working hard to rebuild it. We agree, there are challenges every single day and—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

ONTARIO ARTISTS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): My question is for the Minister of Culture. We have in our gallery today some incredibly patient artists from ACTRA and the Writers' Union of Canada. We had Ms. Fiona Reid here a little earlier, but we've managed to drive her out with our bad acting.

Interjection.

Ms. DiNovo: Oh, is she here? There she is. Hello. We also have the American Federation of Musicians—the Canadian office of that organization—and the Brantford Musicians Association.

These artists are here for a reason. They've been waiting for your report on the status of the artist in Ontario, which was to have been completed within the first two years of your mandate—and still no report. The report was to lay the foundation for status-of-the-artist legislation that would improve the living standards of tens of thousands of Ontario's artists. My question is very simple: Minister, when is this long-overdue report finally going to be released?

Hon. Caroline Di Cocco (Minister of Culture): I would like to welcome so many talented artists here today and also say how much we value their contributions to our cultural fabric and to the economy of Ontario. Today, we also had the High Park choir here singing, as well as a trio, which filled the halls in this place with music, a magnificent sound.

I'm pleased to convey to the member that this government has made some significant strides in creating a strong, healthy environment for arts and culture to thrive, and that in turn helps artists in Ontario. But we also have undertaken the largest consultation process of its kind, involving 4,000 individuals and associations.

My ministry and this government are committed to ameliorating the socio-economic conditions of artists, and we're working toward that end.

Ms. DiNovo: Meanwhile, her budget has been cut by about \$88 million; meanwhile, status-of-the-artist legislation is still not in place; meanwhile, many who are artists in our province are classified as independent contractors and are not covered by the Employment Standards Act; meanwhile, child performers are not protected; meanwhile, income averaging is not in place. She promised on May 15 of last year that it would come in momentarily—it's in Hansard, Madam Minister. So

my question again is, when will you bring in the report, when will you bring in status-of-the-artist legislation?

Hon. Ms. Di Cocco: We have a very strong record of support for artists in this province. I'm going to state again that this ministry and this government value artists and are committed to ameliorating the socio-economic conditions of artists. I want to assure artists in this province that we're working toward that and making progress on that.

I know that this member is new to the Legislature, and I just want to provide one bit of information that I think is important for her to know: On June 24, 1991, the Minister of Culture of the day, Mr. Marchese, said, "I'm committed to working with the arts community and my colleagues in other ministries to develop a strong and effective status-of-the-artist policy in Ontario." In five years, they made absolutely no progress, but we're making progress on the—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. New question.

BROWNFIELD SITES

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): My question is to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. On November 9 last year, I had the sad responsibility of announcing the closure of Domtar Fine Papers. This closure signalled the end of the era of big manufacturing as a principal source of employment in Cornwall. Since then, the community has shown its resilience and, with the support of this government, has begun its renaissance.

A big part of that renaissance was the announcement recently of the sale of the Domtar property to a local consortium. The announcement of the sale to a local buyer is truly good news, as it means there is interest in developing the former Domtar lands with the needs of the community in mind. I know that local municipal economic development officers will be working hard with the new owners of the Domtar property to attract new investment and promote the Domtar lands as some of the most desirable real estate in eastern Ontario.

Minister, what is your ministry doing to assist economic development teams at the local and municipal levels?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues): Thank you very much for this question. It's important to note that the provincial government is prepared to go where help is needed, and the area of Cornwall is a very good example of this. The officials at MEDT, the economic development ministry, literally rushed in to see what they could do in preparing for the future of Cornwall and worked diligently with the economic development officers there. We've also hired new staff for this area to work with local officials to develop, and what recently came out of that is a report that has unveiled 35 areas now ready for investment in terms of manufacturing sites. This is the kind of collaboration

that's required so that all of our regions across Ontario can be investment-ready. We're very pleased to say that we have three offices in the eastern Ontario area with six business officials on the ground, working with every potential opportunity. May I say as well that the local officials whom we've been glad to work with have done a tremendous job in making this area ready for investment.

Mr. Brownell: One of the biggest challenges in making this transition from our traditional heavy manufacturing base is in rejuvenating brownfield sites. Beyond the Domett lands, there are many opportunities for converting industrial lands into vibrant mixed-use development. Just this August, the Minister of Labour had the opportunity to witness the redevelopment at the historic Cotton Mills on Cornwall's waterfront. The city of Cornwall, Chuck Charlebois of Groupe Renaissance and the Kaneb family of Cornwall Warehousing are to be congratulated for their hard work and vision on the Cotton Mills lands. However, municipalities and community groups like Renaissance face difficulty financing major brownfield projects.

Minister, what sort of incentives does the province offer to municipalities and developers to take on brownfield development?

1540

Hon. Ms. Papatello: I'll refer it to the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): There is a little bit of what I describe as the Cornwall miracle going on in eastern Ontario, an area where we've seen some job loss, but also some real revitalization in the economy. One of the reasons we are moving forward on strengthening entities that want to create new jobs on brownfield sites is because of the way in which it inspires a new generation of economic growth in places like my friend describes.

Right now we have very specific tax incentives for entities that are willing to develop on brownfield sites. I know that my friend from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh is working directly with the communities, and I expect to see some really interesting new developments as a result of his work. Thank you, sir.

CONSIDERATION OF BILL 107

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby-Ajax): My question is for the Premier. During the last election campaign you talked about cynicism among the electorate with respect to Ontario politics. You explicitly promised, and I quote, "Your MPP should be free to represent your views, not just parrot the views of his or her party. We will make sure all non-cabinet MPPs are free to criticize and vote against government legislation." Premier, Bill 107, your proposed destruction of Ontario's human rights public complaints and investigation system, is not yet law. According to the website of the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal, a transition team already has been hired and is

working to design a new tribunal. What happened to your campaign promise? You're presuming that Bill 107 is going to pass, thereby making a sham of the committee process. How can you possibly expect your MPPs on this committee to vote without even considering the views of their constituents? And what do you have to say to the many racial—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Attorney General.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): I'm not quite sure what language is used on the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal's website. As you know, the tribunal is at arm's length from the Ministry of the Attorney General. Certainly nobody in this House—and neither the tribunal nor the commission in any way, shape or form—presumes to know what this Legislature will do in any matter. If you're suggesting that the tribunal is engaging in that activity, that's not my experience at all. In fact, I think what the tribunal is trying to do is look at the various options that may be ahead for the system in the event that Bill 107 moves forward. Certainly nobody presumes to question in any way, shape or form the wisdom of this Legislature as it continues to look very closely at Bill 107.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mrs. Elliott: My question again is for the Premier. Your campaign promise was, and I quote, "We will make our institutions more democratic by freeing your MPP to represent you," and "We will give more independence and power to legislative committees."

Premier, as you know, the justice policy committee is going to be voting tomorrow on a proposal to extend the hearings on Bill 107 until the hundreds of concerned organizations and groups have had the opportunity to make their presentations before the committee.

Given the precedent that was established during the summer committee hearings, that everyone who wishes to make a presentation before the committee can do so, are you going to allow your Liberal MPPs on this committee to vote freely on open and democratic hearings and to follow the established precedent, or are they going to have to act like trained seals and shut off the hearings?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: Obviously, the committee will have a number of matters that it's going to be considering this week. It's in the hands of a very good committee. I note that the reason there is significant interest in this bill is that we have not had the opportunity to provide and update the human rights system in more than 40 years.

When the Conservative Party was in government, there was absolutely zero interest in reforming the human rights system. They cut funding to the human rights system, they showed nothing but disdain towards the issues faced by the human rights system and they made no effort to reform the human rights system. So it is good to see the Conservative Party's new-found interest in human rights reform.

I look forward to the matter being debated in the committee, not only tomorrow and the next day but

however long it takes. As the member knows, that's in the hands of the House leaders and that's in the hands of the committee, where it should be.

SAULT AREA HOSPITAL

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. When the McGuinty government approved the plan for a new Sault Ste. Marie area hospital in April 2005, you told people in Sault Ste. Marie that construction would start in early 2006, and you said the hospital would open in late 2008. Then you said construction would start in spring of 2007 with an opening in 2009. Now the chair of the Sault Ste. Marie hospital planning committee says no hospital at least until 2010 because of “delays getting into the bidding process.”

Premier, will you guarantee today that the construction of the Sault-area hospital will start in the spring of 2007 and will be completed on time in 2009, and on budget, like you promised?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): The Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): The leader of the third party was in the Soo and spitting out these kinds of lines. The vice-president of the Sault-area hospital called his remarks “trash and nonsense” and, in fact, they are. Construction of the new Sault Area Hospital is on schedule. It is anticipated to begin in the summer of 2007. The tendering process, including evaluation of the proposals, is scheduled to be completed in spring of 2007, on schedule. The completion date for the project will not be confirmed until the negotiations with the successful bidder have been concluded and a construction schedule has been submitted. This has been the fact since the very beginning. The member well knows this. In fact, this announcement and this process and this project have been so well greeted by the people of Sault Ste. Marie, who have been desperate for a new hospital—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

Mr. Hampton: I didn't hear a guarantee there, and I know why. Because construction delays are already a reality for your profit-driven private-finance hospital in North Bay, and the Belleville profit-driven private-finance hospital project deadlines have been pushed back three times. Even your member from Sault Ste. Marie told the Sault Ste. Marie Star, “No one knows exactly when the completion date is for the Sault Area Hospital.”

I say to the Premier, what the people of Ontario want to know is, how much additional money and how much additional time will the McGuinty government's profit-driven private-finance hospital scheme cost our health care system?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: The public, not only the people of the Soo but the people of Ontario, will be price-protected. Unlike the NDP and their former member, Mr. Martin, who could not deliver a new hospital in Sault Ste. Marie,

a new cancer centre in Sault Ste. Marie, David Oraziotti, the member from Sault Ste. Marie, is delivering a new facility that will be 20% larger than the existing two hospitals, that will have an emergency room twice the current size. A 289-bed publicly owned hospital will house a radiation treatment satellite and provide closer-to-home access to life-saving care for more than 100,000 residents of Sault Ste. Marie. Speaker, I would want you to know that Algoma region residents too will share in this great news. In fact, once we have a project agreement finalized and signed, a copy will be posted on the Infrastructure Ontario website so that not only Sault Ste. Marie residents but all Ontarians will be able to—

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London–Fanshawe): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Last year, the members of this House took a strong stand on accessibility when they voted for the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, which will make Ontario more accessible to people with disabilities by law. Could you, Minister, tell us what steps are being taken to implement this act?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Thank you very much for the question. We all know the devotion of the member from London–Fanshawe with regard to accessibility. As all honourable members of this House know, the act lays out the road map to make Ontario accessible to all people by 2025—and 2025 is not the beginning, it is the end.

1550

Under the act, new and mandatory accessibility standards are being developed which will bring down barriers that many people with disabilities face in their daily lives. In October 2005, we announced that the first two standards to be developed would cover the areas of transportation and customer service. I am pleased that the customer service standard development committee has agreed upon a proposed standard on accessible customer service. The standard has been posted for consultation with the public.

We have also begun accepting applications for membership on the third standard development committee. I invite everyone—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

PETITIONS

DISABLED PERSONS PARKING PERMIT PROGRAM

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): It's a pleasure to present a petition on behalf of the constituents of the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"Whereas a disabled person parking permit can only be issued to qualified individuals who are unable to walk unassisted for more than 200 metres in eight minutes or less without causing serious difficulty or danger to safety or health; and

"Whereas the inability to walk unassisted as defined by the Ministry of Transportation is not always determined by a visible disability; and

"Whereas invisible disabilities can often result in difficulty or danger to safety or health when walking; and

"Whereas fines and revoked privileges resulting from misuse of disabled person parking permits are not always enforced;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to further extend the disabled person parking permit program to include invisible disabilities, and ensure that enforcement is emphasized and carried out to a greater degree."

I'm pleased to present this to Philip, and to sign it and endorse it on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham.

TUITION

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I have a petition here which is to stop tuition fee hikes and improve access and quality in post-secondary education. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from the University of Toronto Students' Administrative Council, and it reads:

"Whereas the Ontario Liberal government cancelled the tuition fee freeze after only two years and approved fee increases of up to 36% over the next four years; and

"Whereas tuition fees in Ontario have increased by more than four times the rate of inflation over the past 15 years; and

"Whereas a majority of Ontarians oppose tuition fee increases and support greater public funding for colleges and universities; and

"Whereas improvements to student financial assistance are undermined by fee increases; and

"Whereas the Ontario government's recent increase to student loan limits is set to push student debt to approximately \$28,000 for a four-year program; and

"Whereas per-student investment in Ontario still lags significantly behind the vast majority of jurisdictions in North America;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, support the Canadian Federation of Students' call to stop tuition fee hikes and petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"—reduce tuition fees to 2004 levels for all students in Ontario and implement an immediate tuition fee freeze;

"—increase public funding for post-secondary education to promote access and quality;

"—expand access to financial aid in Ontario, especially for part-time students; and

"—double the number of upfront, need-based grants for Ontario students."

Mr. Speaker, I present this petition. I agree with it and send it down to the table by way of Colby.

COMMUNITY MEDIATION

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly in support of community mediation. I'd like to thank Syed Hasan and Gavin Riddel of Mississauga for collecting the signatures and sending it to me. It reads as follows:

"Whereas many types of civil disputes may be resolved through community mediation delivered by trained mediators, who are volunteers who work with the parties in the dispute; and

"Whereas Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services established the Peel Community Mediation Service in 1999 with support from the government of Ontario through the Trillium Foundation, the Rotary Club of Mississauga West and the United Way of Peel, and has proven the viability and success of community mediation; and

"Whereas the city of Mississauga and the town of Caledon have endorsed the Peel Community Mediation Service, and law enforcement bodies refer many cases to the Peel Community Mediation Service as an alternative to a court dispute; and

"Whereas court facilities and court time are both scarce and expensive, the cost of community mediation is very small and the extra expense incurred for lack of community mediation in the Peel region would be much greater than the small annual cost of funding community mediation;

"Be it therefore resolved that the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of the Attorney General, support and fund the ongoing service delivery of the Peel Community Mediation Service through Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services."

I'm pleased to support this petition and to ask page Kelsea to carry it for me.

MUNICIPAL PLANNING

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas section 23 of the recently passed Planning and Conservation Land Statute Law Amendment Act, 2006, Bill 51, exempts energy projects from the municipal planning process; and

"Whereas we believe that it is essential to have more transparency and openness in the planning process, not less; and

"Whereas we believe that public consultation and municipal planning on the location of power plants is essential to ensure healthy sustainable communities;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To amend section 23 of the Planning and Conservation Land Statute Law Amendment Act, 2006, to include a process for appeal."

I'm very pleased to sign this and give it to Philip, who is going to take it to the table.

TUITION

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I have more petitions on tuition fee hikes. This is from the University of Toronto Students' Administrative Council, as well. A number of signatures are on this petition, and it reads:

"Whereas the Ontario Liberal government cancelled the tuition fee freeze after only two years and approved fee increases of up to 36% over the next four years; and

"Whereas tuition fees in Ontario have increased by more than four times the rate of inflation over the past 15 years; and

"Whereas a majority of Ontarians oppose tuition fee increases and support greater public funding for colleges and universities; and

"Whereas improvements to student financial assistance are undermined by fee increases; and

"Whereas the Ontario government's recent increase to student loan limits is set to push student debt to approximately \$28,000 for a four-year program; and

"Whereas per-student investment in Ontario still lags significantly behind the vast majority of jurisdictions in North America;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, support the Canadian Federation of Students' call to stop tuition fee hikes and petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"—reduce tuition fees to 2004 levels for all students in Ontario and implement an immediate tuition fee freeze;

"—increase public funding for post-secondary education to promote access and quality;

"—expand access to financial aid in Ontario, especially for part-time students; and

"—double the number of upfront, need-based grants for Ontario students."

Again, I send this down to the table by way of Eshan.

IDENTITY THEFT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I would like you to know that the subject of this petition is identity theft, and it is sent to us by the Consumer Federation of Canada. It reads as follows:

"To the Parliament of Ontario and"—especially—"the Minister of Government Services:

"Whereas identity theft is the fastest-growing crime in North America;

"Whereas confidential and private information is being stolen on a regular basis, affecting literally thousands of people;

"Whereas the cost of this crime exceeds billions of dollars;

"Whereas countless hours are wasted to restore one's good credit rating;

"We, the undersigned, demand that Bill 38, which passed the second reading unanimously in the Ontario Legislature on December 8, 2005, be brought before

committee and that the following issues be included for consideration and debate:

"(1) All consumer reports should be provided in a truncated (masked-out) form, protecting our vital private information such as SIN and credit card numbers.

"(2) Should a credit bureau discover that there has been a breach of consumer information, the agency should immediately inform the victimized consumer.

"(3) Credit bureaus should only report inquiries resulting out of actual applications for credit and for no other reasons.

"(4) Credit bureaus should investigate any complaints within 30 days and correct or automatically delete any information found unconfirmed or inaccurate."

Since I agree, I'm delighted to sign my name to it and send it to you by page Kelsea.

1600

GREENBELT

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to present a petition signed by Bill Griffiths of Beamsville, Tod Lamit of Smithville and many others regarding the financial impact of the greenbelt. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Greenbelt Act was passed by the Ontario Legislature in 2005, economically affecting all ownerships of properties in Ontario; and

"Whereas municipal property assessment caused financial changes to these properties; and

"Whereas the Ontario Legislature did not study the economic impact of the greenbelt; and

"Whereas an effect of protecting environmentally contaminated land as a greenbelt area was not addressed financially;

"Resolution 1"—they want to see an ordering of an economic impact study on the Greenbelt Act that will further the protection of the green lands. In support, I affix my signature.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

REGULATORY

MODERNIZATION ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR LA MODERNISATION DE LA RÉGLEMENTATION

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 25, 2006, on the motion for second reading of Bill 69, An Act to allow for information sharing about regulated organizations to improve efficiency in the administration and enforcement of regulatory legislation and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 69, Loi permettant l'échange de renseignements sur les organismes réglementés afin de rendre plus efficaces l'application et l'exécution de la législation de nature réglementaire et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): When we last dealt with Bill 69, the member for Niagara Centre had made a presentation to the House, and we didn't conclude the questions and comments. Now we'll go to questions and comments relating to the presentation by the member for Niagara Centre. I'm pleased to recognize the member for Thornhill.

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): Let me say how much I appreciated the comments made by the member for Niagara Centre. I certainly was very happy that the member is supporting the objective of the bill, and I'm also very happy that the member from Niagara Centre is satisfied with the briefing given by the Ministry of Labour staff when he requested it.

I also want to assure the House and the member for Niagara Centre that I know one of the reasons for the current approach is that many of our regulatory statutes contain confidentiality provisions that limit or prohibit any sharing of compliance information among ministry programs and with other ministries. Therefore, the difficulty faced by a ministry in sharing information presents obstacles to understanding where greater attention and resources are required.

I can tell you that many business owners and members of the public in particular are surprised at the restrictions. They ask, "How can government be efficient if ministries cannot talk to each other?" The taxpayers of this province find it hard to believe that there isn't communication, it's their understanding that there is, and quite often, when a number of individuals approach them, they keep on asking the same question, "Why are they coming back to us to ask the same question?" They don't necessarily appreciate the reality that the law presently allows. Therefore, this bill is attempting to answer those questions that taxpayers in Ontario have asked. But I trust that this debate will assist us in understanding the bill better.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I've only had the opportunity to just listen to the member's remarks and have this to say: Quite frankly, the general impression initially would be that our caucus would be supporting this bill. We'd have some different arguments than the member from Niagara would be talking about.

But here is the essence of this bill. This bill is eight pages, and yet there are 25 statutes that are being amended. It's being amended in such a way as to, on first review, become more efficient, allowing interdepartmental sharing of both information or privacy issues that need be to fully discussed as well as sharing of some enforcement measures between ministries—natural resources and environment would be a perfect example—and sharing of information on the person who is being considered as having violated some statute. The information from another ministry could be used, on prior convictions and things like that.

So there's a great deal of goodwill here on the opposition side of the House, but certainly the rights of individuals as well as the release of and privacy of information are things that the public need to fully understand. There are eight pages, 25 statutes. There is more to be

said on this bill, and I hope to have the opportunity later today to speak on the bill, but the member from Niagara Centre is always informed on the issues dealing with law, and I think his comments are relevant to the debate on Bill 69.

There's just one more thing. When I look at the more recent report by the Environmental Commissioner, there's a perfect example. The auditor and the Environmental Commissioner, these independent commenters on government, are a valuable resource, and we should be following up on things that they say in their reports by whoever is responsible. So there are things that we do support in that respect.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I too want to commend the member from Niagara Centre, my colleague Peter Kormos, who did an excellent job when he was speaking to this bill the last time it was before the Legislature. In fact, I recall that evening having been one of our what I so affectionately call evenings of classic Kormos. When I read his speech and look at the issues that he raised, I remember fondly that many members of this House quite enjoyed his discussion.

Interestingly enough, in one of the points that he was talking about, he was using a piece of material that perhaps might not have been appropriately used, and the Speaker at the time may have made comment about that. But in fact it was a certain item called a calendar, a calendar that was put together by some firefighters. Coincidentally, here in the Legislature tomorrow we will have a number of firefighters because they will be here to talk about some of the issues that are of concern to them, one of which, of course, is Bill 111, a bill that brings presumptive legislation into place in Ontario, as is the case in many other provinces.

But what we're talking about here is Bill 69, and our lead critic made some really important observations about that bill, particularly the extent to which inspectors are going to become, under this legislation, something of super-inspectors or mega-inspectors. They will be empowered to undertake the inspection of many different areas: not simply, for example, Ministry of Labour inspectors inspecting workplaces for occupational health and safety violations, but also maybe doing meat inspections as well as they moonlight as inspectors who can do many different jobs. So this multitasking has some implications. New Democrats are concerned about those implications and we look forward to this bill now going into a committee process where those implications can be outlined in greater detail.

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): I too am pleased to comment on the remarks of the member for Niagara Centre on Bill 69. I think again, because those remarks were last week sometime, it may be useful just to remind people what Bill 69 is about.

The way many acts are currently structured, each ministry is in essence a silo describing what its own inspectors can do and what information it can collect, and there is a wall between the ministries. What this bill does is simply allow ministries of the Ontario government to

share information with each other, which seems quite a reasonable thing.

There has been quite a bit of conversation about how that will aid the ministries' inspection and enforcement, but I think perhaps less comment on how that will help small businesses themselves. One of the things that I have done is chaired a paper burden reduction task force as part of the Small Business Agency of Ontario, and in that context, one of the frustrations which many small businesses have raised with us is the fact that because of these silos, they keep giving the same information to ministry after ministry, and that this is very frustrating and time-consuming. In fact, one of the things this Bill 69 would allow would be that, for that information which is common, we could collect it once and then share it amongst various ministries. So there is some potential here for a positive impact for small business, as well as simply those inspection and compliance impacts that people have already discussed.

1610

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time available for questions and comments. We will return to the member for Niagara Centre, who has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): When the parliamentary assistant rose to comment on my remarks to Bill 69, I immediately thought of the biblical Joseph, but then I realized that wasn't accurate either, because Joseph's coat was of many colours. I say to the parliamentary assistant, your coat is very colourful nonetheless, but second certainly to that of Joseph, although you may well generate as much envy amongst your brothers and sisters here with a monochromatic coat as Joseph did with his polychromatic garb.

One concern that we have, of course, is the issue of multiple inspectors. That's why this bill has to go to committee. I think there has to be a clear understanding of what the implications are for, let's say, a Ministry of the Environment inspector versus an MTO inspector. I talked about that when we talked about this a couple of weeks ago. We want inspectors to develop expertise unique to their area of work. A Ministry of the Environment inspector may not have the expertise to make the judgment calls that an MTO inspector or a Ministry of Labour inspector has to make. So this is something about which we should be cautious.

I'm looking forward to that being spoken to during the course of committee. I expect the parliamentary assistant will be stewarding this bill through committee. I look forward to that. I suspect this is a bill that can go to committee during the winter break—January, February, March—at least until March 19, when we come back. That would be an ideal time, and then this bill could be wrapped up. It's one of those bills that could be wrapped up in the spring session, once we come back on March 19, 2007. I look forward to that spring session.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It certainly is a pleasure today to come back after a few days of not being

in the House and be able to speak to Bill 69, the Regulatory Modernization Act, at second reading.

I think it's interesting to look at the intent of the bill and what we're trying to accomplish by the passage of this bill. I have been a small business owner myself. Quite often when you hear people offer advice about small businesses, you can tell if the person has been a small business owner or if they would like to be a small business owner, or perhaps they just like to talk about small business. Owning a small business and meeting the challenges of turning a profit, making sure all the employees are paid, making sure you are keeping up to date on the regulations, making sure you are complying with the regulations, is certainly a task in itself, and it's no small challenge. So my own hat is off to those people, the entrepreneurs of this country who on a daily basis put their own name on the line, who aren't beholden to employers themselves but actually provide the incentives and the machinery that I think keeps this economy going.

I come from a community that has some very famous large companies, companies like Ford and Goodrich, companies that are known throughout the world and certainly are wonderful employers in our community. But what really keeps the Oakville economy thriving—and I think this can be said of many small communities—is actually the small business owners, those people who decide to take a risk with their own money, with their own capital. They have an idea perhaps and would like to put that idea forward and perhaps see if they can sell a new product to people. There are a variety of reasons why people go into business.

I think it's incumbent upon the government to realize that governments do not create jobs; business creates jobs. The government's role is to make it easy for business to create jobs, to make it easy to comply with reasonable and sound regulations that ensure that workplaces are clean, that they're safe, that they are complying with all the regulations that we deem to be reasonable in a modern society like we live in in Ontario.

Now, we had our local elections in Ontario just yesterday, and I'd like to congratulate those people who were able to meet with the favour of their local electorate. A good friend of yours was elected, Mr. Speaker, in Oakville yesterday. We have a new regional chair: Gary Carr. We have a new mayor in Oakville as well: Rob Burton defeated long-standing incumbent mayor Ann Mulvale. So there are certainly a lot of people who have put their names forward to serve as elected officials.

When you talk to people at the local level, when you talk to them about things that they would like to see changed or that they think could perhaps be improved with the administration of local government, quite often you get the word "duplication." Quite often people say, "We can't have any duplication within the provision of our services. We simply can't afford to pay two people to do one job. We don't need to have to deal with people at the region when the same service is being provided at the town, or vice versa. We don't need to deal with people at the school board if the same service is being provided at the town."

I think those at the local level who work very closely with their electorates understand how you have to balance a budget. Municipalities do not have the opportunity; they're simply not allowed to run a deficit. They have to run a balanced budget, so they need to make sure that they're using every penny that they collect from taxpayers in a wise manner. That means that they have to take all the duplication out of the system. Sometimes when you get up to the larger levels of government, at the provincial and federal level, you'll find that levels of duplication simply do exist, and despite the best efforts from time to time from previous governments in the past to remove those dual layers of jurisdiction, quite often we'll find that they still exist in legislation. And that's what I think is so exciting about this bill. If you can say that a Regulatory Modernization Act can be exciting in any way, this would be the exciting part: We are starting along the path to remove some of the duplication and to make it easier for those people who are in business in Ontario to comply with the rules and regulations of this province.

I've talked to a number of stakeholders in this regard. I've talked to a number of people from small business agencies. I've been in touch with people from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. They want to be included. They want to make sure that their voices and opinions are heard, suggestions that they're making, as business people who on a daily basis go out into the marketplace and keep our economy running. They want to know that their voice is being heard in this process. I've assured them that we are a government that listens. We want to hear those suggestions. We want to hear suggestions for improving this bill when it goes to the stage where it can be amended. I'd like to see all the suggestions from all the stakeholders, not only from the organizations that represent business, but from those people who are actively involved in the businesses themselves. I think there is a willingness to consult on this bill. It's a bill that certainly makes sense.

I belong to the Small Business Agency of Ontario, as do a number of parliamentary assistants on the government side, and the role of that group is to sit down with representatives of small business organizations, representatives of small business themselves, and ensure that the government is doing all it can to make the lives of small business people in this province easier. It's a group that I'm very pleased to be with, because I think it's an example of how when you work together with an agency or work together with people who are actively involved as stakeholders, you are able to actually make some changes that make life easier, make our economy more profitable, allow companies to create more jobs, allow them to pay more taxes, allow us to provide more services, allow us to invest in our health care system and our education system, and a variety of ways in which people expect their public services.

People expect that public services will be made available to them in the province. They know that public education is extremely important. That needs to be

funded, and it's funded by personal income tax, funded by provincial income tax, but a good portion of the revenues for the province come from our businesses.

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The proposed legislation that's being presented today would enable regulatory ministries—and those are obviously the ministries that administer regulations—to work together much more effectively. That's what the people of Ontario really want to see: They really want to see us working together as a team. This proposed legislation brings what I think is a team approach to regulatory enforcement.

People use the word "communication" a lot today and say that we need to improve our communications in a variety of areas. This bill goes a long way to improving communication between ministries. Often the term "The right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing" is applied to government at all levels. This is a bill that aims to take that away, that aims to allow—in fact, compel—ministries to work together, to talk to each other. It means that a business person does not need to get a visit from 13 separate ministries; it means that those visits can be scaled down when inspections are being done.

It's certainly going to improve the way that businesses comply with the laws in the province of Ontario. The intent of those laws in large part is to protect the public of Ontario. So when you get greater co-operation, when you get information sharing amongst ministries, there are some of the key points that ensure that businesses comply with the laws in Ontario, which the vast majority of the responsible small and large business owners in corporate Ontario want to comply with.

You could probably take a few practical examples. What it would do is, if there was a field staff person paying a visit to a certain business and noticed that something else perhaps needed to be inspected—they noticed that there was another point that the business owner needed some confirmation on—he or she could pass that information on to their colleagues in the Ontario civil service who just happen to work for another ministry. In a lot of respects, that is not allowed today. There are rules and regulations that prevent that from happening. This bill would allow it to happen.

We've heard so often from business stakeholders that they often have to provide duplicate information. Over and over again, they're providing the same information to the government. The intent of this bill is that that be streamlined, that they be able to talk to their governments in a way that doesn't mean that they have to hire people to fill out forms on a repetitive basis, that the paperwork is reduced to a minimum but the regulatory compliance is raised to a maximum.

With the passage of this bill, we'll certainly be going along the road to ensuring that we get maximum protection for the public of Ontario and we allow for a streamlining of rules and regulations for business in this province, and that's what they've asked for.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): I thank the member for Oakville for his contribution to the debate on Bill 69. I'm going to have the opportunity to speak a little more at length shortly, but he touched on a couple of things that are correct in some respects. Sometimes, if you can streamline things and remove some obstacles to the trading of information, that can be a very positive thing. But we also have to ensure that people are protected, that boundaries are not exceeded, and also that this doesn't lead to less efficiency as opposed to more efficiency, because you have more government departments perhaps meddling in areas where they don't currently have any expertise. There are a lot of questions yet to be answered about this bill.

On principle, if you can find something that streamlines a process, I think that's a good thing. I hearken back to the Red Tape Commission of the previous government, which was one of the best things they did: to try to remove legislation that was redundant and created obstacles to efficient government and efficient business and stood in the way of citizens when it came to being able to get things done in the province of Ontario. We had whole scads of those things on the books that impeded people's progress here in Ontario. There are probably still hundreds of those statutes in existence that could be cleaned up and cleared out of the way so that we actually have a more efficient way of doing business here in Ontario, and that's something that probably should continue.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I rise to comment on the speech that the member from Oakville has just made.

Although I think it was an aside in his speech, I would be remiss if I did not comment on it as well: He talked about his own riding of Oakville and the election of a new council and a new mayor. Of course, as politicians, we all commend and laud and congratulate the winners—and Mr. Burton is to be done so—but I would be remiss if I didn't talk about my long association with Ann Mulvale, who was, in my view, one of the best mayors that Oakville ever had and in fact is one of the best mayors that I had the privilege of meeting in all of the time that I was a mayor in East York. When we used to meet monthly during the mayors' conferences and the big-city mayors' conferences, you could always count on her being there as a very strong voice of reason, not only for her own municipality but for all the municipalities of Ontario, and the tremendous work that she went on to do with AMO. We are going to miss her. I know politics is a rough game and you can't win them all, but I hope there is a future for her, maybe even in this House.

In terms of what the member from Oakville had to say about businesses and this bill trying to help business, I would remind him that although there have been very few public comments on this, at least that have reached my desk so far, the only people who are reticent to accept this bill on face value so far, to me, have been businesses. Businesses are worried about a number of factors, and I will be dealing with them in my own speech. They are

worried about the regulatory modernization. They are worried that business is going to have some difficulty accepting some of the changes or how far the bureaucrats are going to be allowed to enforce the bills. Perhaps the member in his two-minute exchange will tell us how this is going to help business.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): I appreciate an opportunity. I thank the member from Oakville for giving us an umbrella view of what the legislation is attempting to do. When you think of the 13 regulatory ministries that we're going to try to compartmentalize in terms of communicating with each other, it's actually very laudable and doable. But the member from Beaches–East York gives us the challenge: Will business accept this? Well, quite frankly, a lot of that gets done with stakeholder conversations. We want to make sure that our discussions with them clarify and “de-mythdify” what the attempt is in this piece of legislation. It's not to create more angst for them; it's to remove the angst that they're going to be feeling, that they presently feel.

Other pieces of legislation like this don't exist in the United Kingdom, in Australia. There is something similar to this in Florida, and they have had a very successful transition when they've talked about how effective the legislation has been. So I think we're headed down the right path. I think this is progressive. I also want to say that other provinces haven't actually done this. They've done legislation to talk about enforcement for law purposes in communicating back and forth to ministries, but they haven't created this one to help business get rid of that stigma, of the piles and piles of paperwork that they face in a regular business, particularly small businesses. That is precisely why this bill is being designed the way it is.

The parliamentary assistant will be providing us with some more evidence and more pieces of information to show us exactly how this piece of legislation is going to answer some of those concerns. Quite legitimately, there are some concerns being raised by the opposition about how it is going to affect small business, how it is going to affect big business, how it is going to affect our capacity to be able to communicate from ministry to ministry. And guess what? I think this is the right direction we should be going in, particularly when we're now doing way more inter-ministerial discussions than we've ever done in the past.

I look forward to this. I believe it's the right direction, and I want the member to know that he's got my full support.

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Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): It's my pleasure to add some comments to the speech from the member from Oakville on Bill 69, which is An Act to allow for information sharing about regulated organizations to improve efficiency in the administration and enforcement of regulatory legislation and to make consequential amendments to other Acts. The bill's fairly small but affects many different statutes, and I think there is going to be a need for consultation.

I note some of the select stakeholder reactions so far. The Retail Council of Canada speaks out with regard to the creation of inspectors—super-inspectors, I'll call them—who can inspect in different fields. They say, "RCC is concerned that authorizing field officers to make observations—visual or otherwise—for potential contraventions of a statute under which they have no training is irresponsible and unfair. Without proper training, inspection officers do not have the expertise to determine what is relevant to another statute or ministry."

That is certainly a very valid concern. I hear stories about Ontario government inspectors that do know their industry, and you get feedback from industries where they feel that the inspectors are not being reasonable or don't know their particular industry. So if you're asking one inspector to be knowledgeable about many different industries, there certainly could be problems.

I note also that you hear from business all around the province, particularly in the north, about the problem of red tape. What did this government do? They did away with the Red Tape Commission that was meant to do away with unnecessary red tape to make it easier to function in business here in the province. So I was very disappointed when this province did away with the Red Tape Commission that had been in place.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to the member for Oakville for his two-minute response.

Mr. Flynn: It certainly is a pleasure to follow the members from Parry Sound–Muskoka, Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, Beaches–East York and Brant, who all provided what I think are very reasonable, progressive and good comments on this bill.

The question's been asked, how does this make it better? How does this make it easier? I guess the easy answer would be, as a former small business owner—and I say that to pass comment on small business and what it feels like to be a small business owner. You really have to be one, or you have to have been one in your past, to understand what it's like some weeks to make sure that the bank gets paid, the rent gets paid, the suppliers get paid, and the employees get paid; some weeks, everybody gets paid but you. But for some reason, there's a spirit of entrepreneurship in some people that just keeps going. That's how small businesses grow into large businesses. What they don't want is to be inflicted with having to deal with 13 or 14 different, separate agencies that pay 13 or 14 different visits to that same business and take away from the productive time for the manufacture of goods, the provision of services, or whatever that small business is engaged in providing to the public or to its clients. It needs to concentrate on being productive.

We're in a global economy. We need to be competitive. We need to beat countries and we need to beat and meet other economies around the world. You don't do that if you're filling out forms; you don't do that if you're preparing for visits from the government. If we can streamline those visits, if we can make that regu-

latory approach very simple, something that's easy to comply with, I think you'll find that will meet the favour of most small and responsible business owners in this province, and large businesses as well. I think this bill deserves the full support of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Yakabuski: I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 69, An Act to allow for information sharing about regulated organizations to improve efficiency in the administration and enforcement of regulatory legislation and to make consequential amendments to other Acts. It sounds like a good idea, and it probably is. The member for Oakville talked about the right hand and the left hand, that sometimes they don't know what the other one is up to. So from that point of view, it's a good thing to try to meld things, or rationalize them if you want to call it that, so you have more efficiency. The question is, will this bill actually lead to that? I think it's the best intention of the government to do that, but will this actually accomplish it?

Our experience in this House and as citizens and people who have followed government over the years is that no matter what piece of legislation comes forward—and many times it is one that all parties even endorse—there are unintended consequences of that piece of legislation that come back to bite you, so to speak, after its implementation. You have to look at those pieces of legislation—review them—to see if there are things that were not considered or were left out, or that maybe should have been left out.

I think this is one of those bills. I wouldn't pretend to be able to predict all the consequences, good or bad, of this particular piece of legislation. I haven't had the time or the opportunity to analyze it at great length nor to determine what my conclusions would be on certain aspects of the bill. But there are some groups who have already let it be known that they have some concerns about this bill; the Retail Council of Canada is one of them.

I think this is one of those pieces of legislation that, while there wasn't a great hue and cry out there for a bill for this exact reason, there was certainly enough concern that there were more efficient ways of doing business that perhaps the government felt it was imperative for them to act. It is now just as imperative for them to say, "Okay, this is the bill and this is the process. We're now going to ensure that this bill gets out for some opportunity to be vetted by the people who are going to be most affected by it."

As my friend from Beaches–East York said, the only real negative feedback or concerns he's had have been expressed by people in the business community. The good Lord knows we don't make it easy on people in the business community to do business in this country. We're a very regulated regime. We tend, or our practice has been, to err on the side of more laws and more regulations, as opposed to fewer laws and regulations, under the guise that we're protecting consumers. But sometimes we're actually hurting our competitiveness and

hurting the ability for businesses to survive and possibly thrive in this environment.

There's no question that this bill needs to be sent for further examination. Of course, that's why we have the committee process as part of our legislative process. I'm certainly hopeful that the government will take this bill and give us an opportunity to have hearings with stakeholders who have the most to gain or lose by any piece of legislation. They're going to be very helpful in assisting us in the process of dissecting this bill and ensuring that at the end of the day we get something that works.

There's nothing in here that strikes us as monumentally negative or positive, but I do want to speak to what the Retail Council of Canada has said. This is an organization, as you know, that represents hundreds of thousands of businesses across the country and really does speak for them on matters of concern to retail business. I just want to get that; I do have it somewhere. One second, Mr. Speaker. I have it right here.

What the Retail Council of Canada says is, "We are particularly concerned about the inclusion of complaints in this section. There is insufficient protection against the publication of frivolous complaints which may cause damage to a company's reputation and brand, a concern which is especially acute in a highly competitive industry such as retail"—on the publication of organization information. So that's one of their complaints.

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As I said, this is one of the groups that has the most concern about it, and you can understand, if you've ever read stories about someone who was falsely accused of something and then you heard about the effect that that had on their lives, even if, after going through the process, those people were found to be innocent of all charges. The fact that that has been bandied about in the public domain, in the press and possibly television, depending upon the nature of the situation and the profile of the people involved, we all know how damaging that can be. So business is concerned that a false or frivolous complaint could cause significant damage to their reputation and/or brand. You understand in today's day and age that if a brand gets negatively affected by bad publicity, it can be out of business—out of business, gone—so we have to be doubly sure, triply sure, that we're not doing things that could have dire consequences to businesses in the province of Ontario.

One of their concerns is that when you're having a sort of multi-jurisdictional authority, if you want to call it that, when persons who may have the power to lay charges in a field where they do not have the normal expertise or in areas which were not the expertise of their particular ministry are now transferred to another one, they may not have the necessary background to make proper decisions when they're going across what are today current jurisdictional boundaries. They're concerned that there may be a weakness there with regard to the training. Training is a concern for them. I saw that in one of their submissions, and that's a concern for all of

us; it's not just theirs. I think you've got to ensure that if you are going to pass this kind of legislation, the people to whom you entrust the enforcement of this legislation are properly trained. That doesn't come without a great deal of effort and it doesn't come without an expense. So we have to ask ourselves what the cost of implementing this particular piece of legislation is going to be to the taxpayers of Ontario as well.

Having said some of those things—well, I have said all of it. I haven't just said some of them; every bit of this last bit has been said by me. But having said that, again, we certainly don't have serious concerns. I think we can work with all of these things to ensure that at the end of the day we have a piece of legislation that if its intent is, and I accept that the intent is, to streamline things, we may have something positive here. So let's see where we can get with that.

I want to make a few more comments about that, but I just wanted to also touch on the fact that of course the municipal elections took place yesterday all across the province of Ontario. I am home to 17 municipalities in my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and I don't actually have all of the results. Some of them came in late last night and didn't hit the papers before they went to publication, so I don't have all of the results from all of the elections in my riding. But I represent 17 municipalities in my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke: Mayor Gibeau re-elected in Arnprior; McNab/Braeside, a new reeve, Campbell; Horton, Reeve Johnston re-elected; Renfrew, Mayor Heins re-elected; Admaston/Bromley, Mayor Briscoe acclaimed; Whitewater, Mayor Rathwell acclaimed; Pembroke, Mayor Jacyno re-elected; Peta-wawa, Mayor Sweet re-elected; Laurentian Valley, Reeve Wilson re-elected; Killaloe, Hagarty and Richards, Reeve Bush re-elected; Laurentian Hills, Mayor Gutzman—we should do something so that all municipalities are either mayors or Reeves; I say we should make them all mayors—re-elected; Head, Clara and Maria, all in by acclamation; Bonnechere Valley, Mayor Mintha acclaimed; North Algona/Wilberforce, Mayor Weckworth acclaimed; Madawaska Valley, Reeve Hildebrandt re-elected; Brudenell, Lyndoch and Raglan, Reeve Lentz acclaimed; Deep River, Mayor Aikens acclaimed; South Algonquin, Mayor Bresnahan acclaimed.

I don't have the numbers for all of the councillors and all of that, but I do know all of the reeve and mayor elections. That's 17 municipalities that I represent. So it was quite an election night in my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. I congratulate each and every one of them. I will have a full list of the councils as well at a later date, but I congratulate all of those people who have been re-elected and/or acclaimed. I also congratulate those who haven't been elected and thank them for involving themselves in the great democratic process that we have here in this country, and I certainly commend everyone who is willing to put their name on a ballot and have their views scrutinized, to allow the public to decide whether or not they will have them representing them for a prescribed period of time in a specific jurisdiction.

Back to the bill, Mr. Speaker—and I do appreciate your indulgence on that. But I did want to talk about those elections in my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

This legislation, if passed, will allow for the publication of certain types of collected information. It will permit the designation of individuals to exercise functions under more than one regulatory scheme. It will allow a court to consider prior convictions under multiple regulatory schemes in determining the appropriate sentencing of a defendant. That's a pretty significant aspect of the bill. Even in a court of law sometimes you're not allowed to deal with previous convictions. Judges often rule on those kinds of things. So in the scheme of business and regulations, we need to see just what kind of effect this would have and whether or not it is even constitutionally acceptable. These are things that I think we need to determine through the committee process.

One of the questions I have—and let me preface this by saying we have a great public service here in the province of Ontario. But I also know that bureaucrats sometimes can go too far. One of the concerns I have is, how far can and will a bureaucrat go with this new authority that they may have under this legislation? That's always a concern for people. That's always a concern for business. It's particularly a concern in rural Ontario.

I want to tell you about a little situation in my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke in the town of Renfrew, where the Canadian Food Inspection Agency a few weeks back descended upon the Renfrew Home Bakery, a business of over 30 years that's been providing a tremendous product to the people of Renfrew and area. In fact, it produces a special rice bread—I might get this wrong—for celiacs, people who are wheat intolerant and can't eat bread made from wheat. That particular product they make is sold even as far away as here in Toronto because of its quality, its taste and the overall great product they're offering. The CFIA descended upon them because they weren't putting proper labels on a loaf of bread. So there's a law on the books since 1972 that requires that you label things in a particular fashion. That law, when it was passed, probably with the greatest of intentions, was there to supposedly protect the consumer. But you see that unintended consequences thing I was talking about earlier: What happened is that now you've got this overzealous bureaucrat who decided he was going to see if he could enforce that legislation on little Renfrew bakery. The only complaint I've ever heard about the Renfrew Home Bakery is that—you know what?—sometimes they're out of stock because their products are in such demand, they're so good and the people in Renfrew want their products. Sometimes you show up there for one of the fine wares they're selling and they're sold out because, you see, they can only produce so much, and at some point in the day they may be out of stock. That's the only complaint I ever heard about the Renfrew Home Bakery. Rick and Pam Power do a great job there.

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What's the intention of coming down on people like that? Oh yes, we've really got a lot to worry about from the Renfrew Home Bakery. It's a home bakery. They're in the middle of town. Their neighbours are their customers. You don't have to worry about some poison from mushrooms coming out of Thailand or something that haven't been properly inspected. No, this is the home bakery, for goodness' sake, in Renfrew. But the Canadian Food Inspection Agency decided—I shouldn't say that; a bureaucrat employed there decided. But I must say that I'm encouraged by the fact that our federal member of Parliament, Cheryl Gallant, has also gotten involved in it. I believe that Chuck Strahl, the Minister of Agriculture, who's responsible for that, is going to take a good look at that. I believe that the federal government has a better outlook on these issues affecting rural Ontarians than this provincial government that we have, which seems to be fairly immovable in its attempts to bring the hammer down on rural people when it thinks they might be out of line. So I'm really encouraged and hopeful that we're going to have more progress on this federal issue. I hope the Renfrew bakery is going to be producing some of its great products for years and years to come.

I don't want to get off the topic too much here, because we have limited time, but that's what can happen, that old story I was telling you about unintended consequences. For every good thing that you may get out of a piece of legislation, you have to be prepared for those unintended consequences. That's a situation we have that we're going to have to take a look at with Bill 69 to ensure that those people who need to be protected are protected, but that we don't have that old bugaboo of unintended consequences coming up to bite us.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms. Horwath: It's my pleasure to make a few comments on the remarks of the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke on Bill 69. But first, before I do that, something of utmost importance has recently occurred, and that is that two wonderful women from Hamilton are here to join us on the status-of-the-artist day to participate in that as artists and art supporters—Renée Wetselaar and Betty Ann Bushell—both from the wonderful community of Hamilton. So it's important to acknowledge that they came all the way from Hamilton, not during rush hour, likely, and hopefully they won't have to go home during rush hour, but nonetheless it's good to see them here. In the work they were doing with status of the artist and artists' day here in Queen's Park, they decided to come in and hear us debate Bill 69.

I do want to comment that the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke raised a number of important issues that I think need to be reviewed by the committee process once this bill finishes its current stint in second reading debate. There are a number of issues that New Democrats have put on the record around this bill, particularly acknowledging that there are risks involved in expanding the powers of an inspector for one ministry to be able to inspect other areas; for example, a labour employment

standards inspector going off and inspecting in the health field or the food field, which I think is what the member was talking about. These mega-inspectors bring with them some implications, not the least of which is that we want to make sure inspections are done well, are done properly—do the right thing—but that the ministries are funding these positions in a way that inspectors are doing enough of the good work they need to do.

Mr. Racco: I wanted to thank the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and assure him that it's my opinion that we will be able to satisfy his concern as we move on this bill.

I also want to take the opportunity to congratulate the new councils of both the city of Vaughan and the town of Markham, which I represent, and in particular, if I may, my wife, who was re-elected in the city of Vaughan.

I also want to assure the member from Hamilton East that we have no intention of creating super-inspectors or super-inspectorates with this legislation—she raised that issue. For one thing, super-inspectors are not a feasible option, given the complex and technical nature of inspection and enforcement work done by our well-trained ministry staff. The intent of this legislation is to bring together special teams that can work together on special compliance projects. Where a special team is set up, the bill would require specific limitations to be set out in writing, including the scope of the assignment and the time period for the team's operation.

This legislation is about changing how government works for Ontarians in a way that is responsible and effective; that is really the objective. Improved communication means less duplication, and less duplication means fewer headaches for both large and small businesses. Of course, by changing our approach to regulatory compliance, we would be able to use compliance information more effectively and target enforcement reports better. It makes sense.

Mr. Miller: It's my pleasure to add some comments on the speech by the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke on Bill 69, the Regulatory Modernization Act. The Ontario PC caucus recognizes the importance of a sound regulatory and enforcement regime; however, we wish to ensure that those charged with enforcement and inspection, especially across regulatory areas, are able to competently assess regulatory procedure to avoid unnecessarily burdening employers.

The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke was talking about unintended consequences. He told a story about a small bakery, the Renfrew Home Bakery. Certainly we all have situations like that in our own ridings, and particularly, I would say, in small rural ridings. I certainly have concerns about creating inspectors who may not have the expertise to know what they're inspecting. It's always difficult to build common sense into this type of legislation.

1700

I look at the area that I'm critic for, MNR, and I see the conservation officers and hear stories from all around the province of how they're not being properly funded to

adequately do their job. In fact, before the session broke for Remembrance Day, I brought in a situation in Blue Mountains where the municipality has paid \$1,000 to hire MNR conservation officers to train OPP officers to do their job of inspecting the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, because this government broke a written promise to fully fund the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, the fish and wildlife program, that they had made to the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters in the last election campaign. But I think the point that the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke brought up about unintended consequences is one we need to pay attention to.

Mr. Prue: I listened intently, as I always do, to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. As he listed off the 17 municipalities in his riding, I could not have anything but awe, bewilderment and wonder at the 17 municipalities, whose total population must approximate 100,000 people. I remember, going back to the megacity debate, when arguments were made in this House that the borough of East York, at 115,000 people, was too small to exist. I'm just in total awe, and I wonder how these many municipalities, 17 of them, can exist. But good for them that they do.

I do have to question whether democracy is alive and well, because he listed off at least four or five wherein the mayor or the reeve was acclaimed. I don't know. I certainly know that here in Toronto, such a thing has not happened for almost forever—

Mr. Yakabuski: Since 1347.

Mr. Prue: Since 1347, perhaps.

Having said that, he also went on to talk about overzealous bureaucrats—and I must stand up for the lonely and much-maligned poor bureaucrats—overstepping the bounds. Quite the opposite is true, having once been a bureaucrat myself, albeit in the federal sphere. Bureaucrats are tightly controlled by the legislation they are sworn to enforce, and one ought not to malign those bureaucrats. They do a job that they are paid for, and they do it very well. They do it honestly, they do it with supervision, and they must be able to back up what they do in the courts and tribunals of the land. So just a word for the bureaucrats and the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke: Those bureaucrats are doing the work that this Legislature entitles them to do, enforces them to do and wants them to do.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, who has two minutes.

Mr. Yakabuski: I appreciate the comments from members from Hamilton East, Thornhill, Parry Sound–Muskoka and Beaches–East York.

The member for Hamilton East started to talk about it, and it's exactly what we need to see happen with this bill so that we don't have those unintended consequences: that this bill get to committee and be properly vetted through hearings, so that those who have a real understanding and a stakeholder connection to this bill take a long, hard look, attend those committees and give us the

kind of advice we need so that this piece of legislation can be made better. Clearly, there are some issues with it, and if we can use the process to improve that piece of legislation, that's great.

On the issue I started with, the Renfrew Home Bakery: I started with how I believe the federal government has a better handle on circumstances affecting rural communities and rural Ontario than this government does. A case in point: We don't want to have a situation like we had last year where church suppers are being shut down, sandwiches are being Javexed and farmers' markets are shut down because somebody comes in and takes a piece of legislation and enforces it to the letter of the law. With all due respect to the member for Beaches—East York, yes, they are carrying out the law and we pass these laws, but everybody has got to have judgment too. There's the letter of the law and there's the spirit of the law. And when people are bent on enforcing the letter of the law, they lose the spirit of the law many times. That's why you have church suppers being shut down in the province by this government over here.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Prue: I started out by reading this bill and found it to be a rather dry piece of legislation, as we often do. What intrigued me most is the limited capacity to which this bill can possibly be used. I started out by looking at "Meaning of 'organization,'" and it caused me some degree of angst because it says, "In this act, a reference to an 'organization' means an entity to which designated legislation applies and in respect of which some or all of the types of information set out in section 4 are collected under the authority of or for the purposes of the designated legislation."

That didn't tell me a whole lot, because an organization quite literally now can be anything. It's whatever the government designates to be an organization. It can be a company. It can be a church group. It can be a Boy Scout troop. I don't know where this ends. It can be a political party. I don't know what it can be. It can be anything, because the legislation here is not clearly defined.

I went on to see what kind of information can be collected, and it's pretty timid stuff that's contained within the body here. First of all, I skipped down. Respecting the owners or the officers or directors of this nebulous, ethereal organization, which I guess could be a Boy Scout troop, it says that we can collect "his or her name, home address and home telephone number." I don't think anyone's going to lose too much sleep over that. It goes on to say, however, "the types of information described in paragraphs 8 and 9 where they pertain to the owner, officer or director in that capacity." It seems to me that you can collect a name, address and phone number—not, I guess, a serial number of a person—or you can collect what's in 8 or 9. I thought, "Let's go to 8 and 9 to see what this government is trying to collect." And here is where the rubber hits the road:

"8. Information compiled in connection with an examination, test, audit, inspection, investigation or other inquiry....

"9. Information related to an organization's compliance with designated legislation...."

Again, that's pretty timid stuff. If you're an individual, you can only have information conveyed which is of a very public nature. If you are an organization, there's a whole bunch of stuff that can be collected, but it's hardly stuff that I think would cause many people to lose sleep:

"1. The legal name of an organization." The government can publish that. My goodness, how earth-shattering is that?

"2. The name under which an organization operates, if it is not the legal name." So if you have a numbered company and you own a company, they can publish both of them.

"3. The address, telephone number, fax number...." Big deal.

"4. Any identifying number, symbol...." So I guess Coca-Cola—if that's an organization—can use the symbol of Coke.

"5. Statistical information about an organization....

"6. ... a licence, permit, certificate....

"7. ... complaints filed....

"8. ... examination, test, audit, inspection....

"9. ... compliance with designated legislation...."

Then comes the kicker, and I think this is probably what's going to bother most of the companies. I'm going to deal with them at the end of my speech. They're just a little bit worried. They have to be worried about number 10. I don't know why governments add this. I know it's a catch-all and I know they can't think of everything, but this is what causes a great degree of confusion and angst amongst ordinary business people—when the government includes "10. With respect to an organization, any other type of information that is prescribed." There it is. If you wonder why people are afraid of the legislation, you just have to read number 10. I don't think the other ones will cause anybody too many sleepless nights, and perhaps they should not. But businesses are the ones who have conveyed, to me anyway, their real worry about what is going to be contained within the body of the legislation, what number 10 can be expanded to include and, I guess, how that's going to affect the operation of ordinary businesses.

1710

I do have some degree of sympathy for government. I have some degree of sympathy for people who work in government—not the nameless bureaucrats my friend from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke was talking about, the overzealous ones, but the people who enforce our laws day in, day out, and the many instances of wrongdoing, the many instances of information that they uncover in the course of their daily duties.

As members of the Legislature, many of you will know I worked for some 20 years in the immigration department of Canada before becoming a full-time politician. In that period of time, it struck me very often that the information that was obtained in the regular performance of a bureaucrat's duty, an immigration officer's duty, someone who was employed by the federal

government of Canada, often could not be conveyed to its rightful place.

I understand what the government is attempting to do here, albeit in a very timid way. I understand that the information that should be conveyed would be very popular to the government and would probably be very popular to the majority of people who look at the legislation, people who see that occasionally an organization or an individual will step outside the four walls of a piece of legislation, will try to do things in a way which may in fact be contrary to law and will attempt to hide that information, knowing full well that the person most likely to discover it is not in any capacity able to use it or to convey it to the proper authorities.

I would assume it's a very popular public thought that if you could catch people cheating the system, if you could bring those who are transgressing to justice, if you could make sure that tax monies are collected equally from amongst the population and from amongst corporations, they would think that this was a really good thing. But then there are, of course, those who would be opposed to this blanket collection of information. Those would be, I think, probably civil libertarians who would wonder whether or not the collection would stress beyond the bounds of privacy—and of course you would find that those who were somehow discovered would be very angry that the information was conveyed to anyone at all.

As I said, I worked in immigration for a long time, and when I worked there it was not uncommon for us to find a great many things during the course of investigations. We would find social insurance numbers sometimes in dozens of names in an individual's pocket. These were used for all kinds of illegal activities, everything from working to applying for hospitalization, OHIP, using the resources of government. They could be used for banking, for fraudulent practices. I remember one time finding a great many social insurance numbers on an individual and we couldn't do anything with them. We couldn't even seize them, even though we knew that they were being used improperly. When we tried to go to our own department, which was then the Department of Employment and Immigration, the employment side, who handed out the cards, to tell them we had the cards, we were rebuked for having done so because privacy legislation would not allow us. It seemed bizarre to me then; it seems bizarre to me now.

If the legislation is going to help in any way, although it's pretty timid—and it's the same thing with health cards: We often found people with health cards who did not have the right to use them, in names that were not their own, and so they were taking advantage of the province's OHIP system, were going to hospitals and doctors on cards that were obviously either forged, fraudulent or not their own. When we tried to hand those over to the Ontario government and say, "Perhaps you should take a look at it," we were forbidden to do so. This undoubtedly cost the taxpayers millions of dollars and ensured that for people who were using the fraud-

ulent cards nothing would probably ever happen to them, save and except if an inspector within the health department found them himself or herself. The fact that they were found by a federal agent ensured that nothing ever happened to them.

The same thing happened with public housing. I remember one time going into public housing and finding that a woman who was living there on rent-geared-to-income, as she was entitled to do, was renting out two out of the three bedrooms to other people, and we were forbidden by law to tell public housing that she was renting out. She was making more in rent from those two rooms than she actually paid in public housing. She was making a profit by living there, which I think would have caused a great deal of concern to the government of Ontario and then later to the city of Toronto, to whom that was downloaded.

I remember finding equally true the frustration that people who worked in other government departments—federal government departments and Ontario government departments—would have information which they declined to forward because they could not do so. Almost always it was people who were living outside the systems, people who were cheating the largesse of the programs, people who were taking advantage where they had no right to take advantage. The only exception that I ever really found when I worked in the immigration department was with the police, because somehow it seemed to me, and seemed to all of us, that they would release any information they found at all in the course of their investigations. They thought nothing of turning over the information to customs, to immigration, to the employment side, to the Ontario government, to Ontario Housing or to anyone else who might make use of it.

I wonder in this legislation—I know where the government's trying to go, but it is a pretty timid piece of legislation. It is timid to the point where you can collect a name, a telephone number, a licence that's been issued and you can convey that to another government department. It seems to me pretty timid, but be that as it may. This is your legislation. We'll see what happens to it in committee.

I looked at the merging of enforcement bodies, and I really have to question this. I don't question this so much as some of the other speakers have said, but I question this in terms of the expertise. We have seen in too many government departments within the province of Ontario, the federal government and even sometimes municipally, where an individual is required to enforce too many laws, to become knowledgeable about too many laws, and that the knowledge required to do it is certainly watered down. Individuals who have to enforce the health act, the fisheries act and the Building Code Act, I would think, would have a very hard time, because each one of those acts comes with tomes of information on jurisprudence, on policies, on regulations, on procedures. It would be quite literally impossible in a very modern and complex society, in a modern and very complex set of legislation put forward by the government of Ontario, to do equal justice to the many jobs that he or she is required to do.

So I'm worried about merging of the enforcement bodies. Far better, it would seem to me, to give each section that requires enforcement the ability to go out there and hire the additional personnel who would be properly trained and equipped to look at their niche, to look at what they needed to do in order to enforce it. Share the information, yes, but make sure you have expertise. It's quite clear if you watch the court proceedings, if you have an opportunity to go into the courts, as I did for many years, and watch when individuals who are hired by government bodies are forced to be put in the witness chair and are examined and cross-examined, usually by competent and aggressive counsel, and are required to lay out in detail their authorities under law, lay out in detail what they were looking for at the time they found the information from whence the information was conveyed. It will become extremely difficult and very complex and literally quite impossible for a lay person required to have too broad a range of duties to do adequate justice to the government's case.

So I'm a little concerned about merging of the enforcement bodies because of the complexity of the law, because of the complexity of the jurisprudence, and because I know full well what happens in the court system when an officer is called and cannot adequately answer the questions of defence counsel. Invariably the enforcement activity is defeated. The workers become demoralized. They wonder why they can't get prosecutions, why they cannot enforce the laws that this government and all governments intend them to carry out.

1720

We have the whole question of the publishing of the information. As I said, I find it kind of timid, but I do want to see, in spite of the timidity of the proposals here before us, what the privacy commissioner has to say about this. It's my understanding that as of today's date, the publishing of the information or the whole aspect of what is to be released has not been reviewed by the privacy commissioner. This needs to happen. We need to know as a government, we need to know as a Legislature what can be released, whether or not this is an exhaustive list, whether it can be expanded, whether the privacy commissioner will say that it passed the test.

There's the whole question of cost-cutting. The minister has said that this is not a cost-cutting exercise. He has not said, though, whether or not additional workers are going to be hired, and I think we need to know that. We also need to know if you're going to ask the workers to do more and more, if you're going to ask them to delve into the responsibilities of one or more ministries or one or more departments within ministries, whether or not these workers are going to expect additional pay. I don't know whether the government has thought of this, but when you expand the duties of public employees, invariably there is a classification process involved. If you expand them, I'm sure that many of the employees who are required to do double or triple duty, who are required to know more than one set of pieces of legislation, more than one set of acts, more than one jurisprudence, are

going to require and probably be eligible under the terms of the public service employment act to be justifiably compensated. This may in fact not result in additional cost savings to the government; it may require even more.

We also have the whole problem here, I think, of moonlighting. Perhaps some people don't worry too much about this, but you have the whole problem of workers working all day and then saying they can go off to work for another government department at night if they want overtime or if they want to moonlight or if they want a second job. I'm not sure. It's not set out in the body of the legislation. I merely ask the question whether or not this is the intent, or is this a consequence of what may happen? So I would ask the parliamentary assistant to perhaps look at that, because it's something that would certainly bother me, were I in the managerial portion of the government having to look at the public employees: (a) Are they going to be paid more for this, as they would be entitled to under the classification; and (b) Is there going to be permission or a possibility that they will be moonlighting, that is, working at more than one job in the provincial public service?

As I said in my two-minuter and at the beginning of this speech, the only complaints I've had to date come from business. We've received three of them. I'd just like to put them into the body of the record.

One is from Judith Andrew of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. She wrote to the minister on April 28, 2006, and asked a pretty strong and salient question. I quote it here: "CFIB"—that's the Canadian Federation of Independent Business—"strongly recommends that before the substance of the Regulatory Modernization Act, 2006 (i.e. the enforcement push) is brought to bear on SMEs, the regulatory burden must be brought into line with the capacity of SMEs to cope with it. To do otherwise would be the height of harshness and unfairness."

George Waggott of Lang Michener wrote to the minister in a brief: "Business can only hope that this leadership comes in the form of greater government efficiency and less regulatory interference as opposed to a more intrusive and restrictive approach to doing business." I think that question needs to be answered as well.

Last, but not least, is the Council of Ontario Construction Associations, which writes, "Overall, the intent of this legislation is commendable, however COCA is concerned with how the government might first define a bad actor, and subsequently how much business/personal information will actually be published and available to the public."

Those are the three comments we've had. They all come from business. I guess business has been a little shell-shocked over the years as government intrudes more and more into what they're doing. I don't think most businesses would mind giving out the information that's contained within the body of the bill, and certainly I as a legislator would welcome any opportunity to even expand upon this if it's going to stop people from committing or being part of illegal actions.

Having said that, business is mindful and business wants some answers. I expect they will be called before the legislative committee. I would welcome any input they have, and, to assuage my fears and those of business, anything the parliamentary assistant may have to say here today.

In conclusion, the legislation may be okay, but there are some very strong questions that need to be asked, and we intend to ask those when we go to committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Racco: I want to thank the member from Beaches–East York and assure him that in our discussions we will certainly clarify all his concerns. But I do want to stress a few points.

On the issue of safeguards, we have heard stakeholder concerns about information sharing, and we have safeguards in the bill to ensure lawful sharing of information among ministries and other provincial regulators. The bill would not open the floodgates to information sharing. It will not expand the types of information that the government can currently collect.

On the consultation issue, the government is committed to consulting with stakeholders on the statutes that would be designated for the purpose of information sharing. The types of information about organizations that could be collected, used and shared would be primarily compliance-related, and the collection, use and disclosure of any information about individuals under the bill would be in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act or other clear statutory rules. We have consulted with the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, and it is comfortable with the approach we are taking.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I believe that those concerns, as I have indicated, have been taken care of, and in future discussions the member will certainly be provided with the information he's asking for. I trust he will be able to support the bill.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): I wonder if I could ask the Speaker of the Ontario Legislature—I think they should issue sunglasses when the member from Thornhill stands up with that jacket on. It's kind of bright in here.

Interjections.

Mr. Chudleigh: Yes, Hockey Night in Canada. Don Cherry would be jealous of said jacket.

This particular piece of legislation is the kind of legislation that very much concerns me. I can well remember from my life before politics that it seems very reasonable to people making decisions that when you have two or three or four different branches of inspectors out doing inspections in two or three or four or five different areas, it would be wonderful to combine all that and make it simple: "Look at all the money we could save. It would be wonderful."

But do you know what happens? You get people who are involved in very, very important parts of private, independent business people's business, and they're not making decisions from the base of knowledge; they're

making decisions based on a book. And the decisions they make out of the book are not always in the best interests of the people they are making these decisions or laying these charges against.

It becomes a very, very dangerous piece of legislation, especially to small business in Ontario, when knowledgeable people are coming in and disrupting the normal flow of what is a very acceptable type of business. When you get that kind of thing happening in Ontario, it creates an environment that small business is not comfortable in, and it basically drives small business out of the province or at least makes it more difficult for that small business to survive. That has been the *modus operandi* of this particular government, and I think this piece of legislation perhaps needs a lot—a lot—of committee time.

1730

Ms. Horwath: It's my pleasure to make a few remarks on the titillating speech of my friend from Beaches–East York. He brought some extremely important issues to light. In fact, I note that he remarked briefly on his own experience in a previous life when he himself was doing work that required certain kinds of inspections when he was with Employment and Immigration Canada. Interestingly enough, I'm sure that my friend did not share with you the very interesting stories that he has shared with me about some of the incidents that he had come upon during that time in his life. Some of them were very interesting. I don't even know how else to describe it.

Nonetheless, all joking aside, the bill itself—and the member from Beaches–East York raised some of those points as well—has details in it that need to be reviewed at a committee process, and we're certainly looking forward to that. I don't think anybody would automatically oppose anything that seems logical, but there are things we need to keep in mind.

For example, a situation came up in my own community very recently where I received a call from a federal government employee whose expertise is advising senior citizens, retired people particularly, about their various pension incomes and how they all relate to each other and how to deal with these matters in a way that is best for them financially, within the context of the taxation system federally. The issue became, though, that these people were taken from their "expert" job descriptions to become generalists within the tax department. They found that they were unable to provide that very specific and good service to senior citizens in our community and they were concerned about that. Similarly, we wouldn't want to see good inspectors lose their expertise and see us, as a province, lose our access to them.

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): It's my pleasure to add my comments to those of the member from Beaches–East York. It's important to focus on what this legislation is all about, and I appreciate the member's comments about some business concerns. This is about making sure that people who work for the government of Ontario are able

to exchange information with each other on issues of provincial concern.

Example: a Ministry of Labour inspector goes in to inspect, either unannounced or to follow up an investigation, a business, one of the hundreds of thousands of businesses in Ontario. If that Ministry of Labour inspector then sees, during the course of his or her inspection, an issue that the Minister of the Environment would be very concerned about, a spill of a hazardous substance behind the shed, the inspector for the Ministry of Labour can't pass that concern on to the Ministry of the Environment inspector. That is the state of the current rules and regulations.

What we need to do is have a system whereby legitimate concerns by those who are trained to be inspectors and understand the importance of being careful with information—just to be able to give pertinent information to another ministry's inspector so they can follow up on it, for the betterment of us all. This is not a super inspector; this is just about exchanging information in a common-sense approach.

Although the member from Beaches–East York referred to words like “prescribed in the legislation” as a source of some concern, he would know that virtually every piece of legislation, particularly regulations, has wording of that sort, because it is impossible to anticipate all of life's eventualities when you draft legislation or regulations. That is a good bill.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Beaches–East York, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Prue: I would like to thank the member from Thornhill, the member from Halton, the member from Hamilton East and the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

The member from Thornhill assuaged my fears and then the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities reinstated them. So I thank the government benches, because there is one saying, “We're going to look at all these things,” but then the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities says he simply wants to pass on the information. In the body of my speech, I agree with passing on the information. I gave my own history within the immigration department and the people with whom I came in contact in other agencies, and even in the same department, and how we were singularly unable to pass that information. I am in total agreement with what the minister says. You need to be able to pass on that information between one government body and another where it is going to help save lives, where it is going to make for a cleaner environment, where it's going to make the legislation that we are passing here meaningful. But then he went on to talk about the prescription at the end, number 10. This always causes me some grief, and I'm sure this is what is causing the business community grief. Yes, I know it's in most of the legislation, but when you leave something open to regulation, when you leave something open to a prescription some years in the future, you are playing upon, I suppose, the worst fears. I would ask the government to think very carefully about

whether you want to do that. You can easily get the legislation through without that particular section.

To the member from Halton, yes, he's correct. Small business is the key aspect for which there has been some negative comment, and we need to make sure that small business is listened to intently so that whatever is passed here is not going to do damage to people who are helping to build our economy.

Last but not least, my good friend from Hamilton East, yes, I have shared with her many good stories, but she is right. We need to make sure that we have experts and not just generalists.

The Deputy Speaker: The member from Halton raised a point about sunglasses. The Chair suggests that if the member from Thornhill wore the member from Beaches–East York's tie, or the member from Beaches–East York wore the member for Thornhill's jacket, there would be a need for glasses and Don Cherry would indeed be envious.

Further debate?

Mr. O'Toole: It's a pleasure. I've listened to many of the comments on Bill 69 and had a chance to review the rather small bill, actually, in terms of its content compared to some of the bills. It's roughly eight pages in English and eight pages in French. In a general sense, probably most of it on the surface you'd agree with. It's streamlining, harmonizing, simplifying and making economic use of human resources.

That being said, I think the member from Beaches–East York and others have pointed out quite succinctly that there are concerns that have been raised by a number of sectors in the economy in a very practical sense of more or less the change in the culture of enforcement, discipline and persons visiting your place of business or your place of work and imposing certain kinds of strategies or styles of doing business. Quite honestly, if they enter your premises, you're probably going to feel somewhat intimidated, or at least vulnerable. If that person is, so to speak, very specialized, as the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities used in his example—you had a person from the Ministry of Labour who was visiting a work site and was very well aware of the Ontario Labour Relations Act and other statutes governing workplace issues—it would be very comfortable for them to make observations.

Where it becomes problematic, of course, is the second part of the streamlining, or allowing shared information from one ministry to another ministry. The person from the Ministry of Labour, in their report of the site visit for a work stoppage, for instance, might make some false assumptions about the materials or substances that constituted the hazard. In fact, you could say that there were things in cleaning the product that were of potential risk to the environment—you know, being washed off—and that was going down the drain and constituting—and they could make some poor assessments of the real situation because they're not expert in all of the areas; they're expert in their Ministry of Labour function.

I think the point has been made in other examples. This is where the member from Beaches–East York had problems with the responses from the two Liberal members. In fact, it would say to me that it reinforces our argument here that this bill probably needs public hearing, or at least public clearing, so that people understand, and honestly understand, the efficiencies of this bill we would support, the efficiencies underpinned with the proper training and expertise by the persons doing the observing. I could go on.

1740

There have been comments, and I'll just list for the record a couple of the observations, because I do have a couple of minutes here to complete my remarks. We have heard input from the Retail Council of Canada with respect to their concerns that the act as currently drafted may in fact frustrate those intentions. These are the intentions, basically, of harmonizing and collecting information, two or three ministries working co-operatively together.

One of the areas they talk about is information sharing. The Retail Council of Canada is concerned that the scope of information that can be collected, used and disclosed is too broadly defined in the act, which raises another issue. In the privacy information, there's really a whole body of discussion on privacy. The key terms that I recall in the health privacy act were "collect"—collecting data; "use"—what it's used for; and "disclose." So when you're talking about information on individuals or corporations, you're looking at three things, primarily: Collecting it—who does it and what's the framework for that? Using it—what's it used for? Is it used for resources or is it used as statistics to analyze, data mining? Disclosing it—disclosed to whom, by whom and under what conditions?

As has been said, our privacy commissioner, Ann Cavoukian, apparently has not been consulted on the bill. As I said before, when you look at collecting, using and disclosing, there should be some relationship between who's collecting the data and are they trained to collect it? Are they prepared to not contaminate the information? Are they properly trained in collecting the data or the information or the samples—blood or other types of samples? Using it and using it to imply a violation of a statute is something else that needs to be clarified very clearly. What are the rules of evidence and the laws to ensure that the information that's being collected is in fact the information that was collected? Disclosing it—there's a whole body of discussion on that. When you're talking about disclosure, you're talking about, did I give consent for the disclosure of the information that you've collected? That's implied consent, or is it informed consent? Did I say you could take my saliva test or not? If I didn't, are you allowed to disclose information, whether it's on a person or on a property? These things will be challenged in court and the litigation would become far more complex.

If you just look at those two issues, you then have to ask the philosophical question of who's checking the

checker. That's the oldest question in time. If I'm to assume that the information provided for the prosecution is accurate, who collected it? Do you understand? What security and confidence do I have in the process?

This is a good framework bill. At this point in time, I can assure you—and I mean this respectfully—it is nothing more than a framework bill. There are 25 statutes that are being amended. Those statutes, for the most part—I could go through them in some detail—are quite honestly not widely understood.

There's the Cemeteries Act. Someone spoke to me, because there was a Remembrance Day event this weekend, about some implication on the Cemeteries Act, that they have to have these reserve funds for perpetual care. Did I know much about it? I said, "Well, I haven't seen too much being amended on the Cemeteries Act, but under the whole funeral business"—there are two different acts: the funeral directors act and the Cemeteries Act. There are two sets of rules and regulations, and there's a whole change in that industry culture, from traditional burials to non-traditional burials, cremation—a whole bunch of cultural things that are starting to change. So I said, "I imagine that cemeteries themselves will need to be changed over time. The oversight for crematoriums and who's going to make sure that all the"—so I'm saying, I just picked one out of a list here that are in themselves a purpose for a reasonable debate. Now, if you, Lord forbid—I think most civil servants I've had the privilege to be in touch with here are well-intended, generally well-informed and capable. But Lord forbid if you have an overzealous inspection officer in the job—a former frustrated OPP police officer or whatever—and they take the role a little bit to the extreme. You have a nasty situation of a small business person being uninformed of a visitation, some assumptions made by a person who gives a heads up to the next inspector who's called in, and you've got a conundrum. Guess what happens to the small business person? Bingo: Get the chequebook out; you're getting a lawyer. Do you understand? The rules of presumed innocence are out the window.

Once the government arrives, as I said initially, you feel a little bit vulnerable. If you've ever been involved at all—and I have in my prior life, not for anything more than that I worked for a large company that obeyed the rules to the best of its ability. But when they show up, if there's a workplace safety issue, the whole place shuts down and you wait for this inspector. You could wait for hours for this inspector to show up. Meanwhile, you're losing one, two, three, four—maybe quite a bit of time, quite a bit of production and quite a bit of money with 4,000 or 5,000 employees sitting around. You've got a problem. But out of respect for that process, they did wait.

When you make it that while they're there, they're looking not just at safety issues but at labour relations issues—maybe it's too far to the washroom or whatever. I don't know some of the rules they may be looking at, but it could paralyze. How does the company, then, get

the disputes resolution mechanism dealt with? I just see a number of problems. As I said before, I've heard from the retail council, who wrote to the deputy minister and brought this to their attention.

Also, the publication of compliance or non-compliance: This sharing of information and the publication thereof becomes evidence in a court battle. It could affect the shares of the company. If, all of a sudden, some pharmaceutical company is visited and there's contamination—what happened to that chocolate company, Hershey's, this weekend? The food inspection agency was brought in. It could affect the shares of the company—not that they should not be unduly, but they should be protected from wrongful information being disclosed.

What is the process here to deal with validation of the information collected? It's eight pages; it's almost like an atom bomb in a plastic bag. Quite frankly, there are 25 bills, and I challenge: Most of the members here, myself included, would not be familiar with five of the statutes that are modified. Those statutes themselves each have different enforcement and information training issues that these inspectors need to be trained on—the changing societal things.

Conceptually, I want to restate that it's a very good idea to streamline and harmonize, and to make efficient use of human resources. There's great agreement and concurrence on that. The issues that are being brought to our attention, I suspect, would be issues that would be part of the public meetings.

There was a good article right after the minister's statement. The minister introduced this bill—I just want to make sure I have the right date for the record; it was February 27, 2006. Here's a small bill. It's been almost a year since this bill was introduced. I don't get it, personally. What's the holdup? Why hasn't it already been out for hearings? I would imagine that the House leaders will make some decision that this bill would probably go out for hearings over the winter, and I would support that. At this point in time, I don't have enough information on it, and our caucus position hasn't been clearly defined either. But that's what I would see.

The article was written by Richard Brennan on February 28, upon the bill's introduction. He questioned Minister Peters at the time, and I would say there wasn't a clear account or response. I quote the Toronto Star article: "Peters said current bureaucratic rules and regulations, for example, prevent a meat inspector from tipping off the environment ministry if he noticed a slaughterhouse was pouring oil down the drain." There are a lot of assumptions in the minister's response. Who said it was oil if it's not there anymore? What evidence and what rules about evidence collection were there? It's absolutely humorous, quite honestly, from my point of view. That's just the minister responding to a newspaper quote on the day of first reading of the bill.

1750

Mr. Kormos had some specific regard or questions when he responded to the bill. I'll leave that up to his side.

Mr. Wilson, the member from Simcoe—Grey, in his response as our critic of the day said, "...sweeping powers to government inspectors. I'll say at the beginning that it's sad that you need to change the laws—or you feel you need to change the laws—because inspectors aren't able to pass on information today. I'm not sure that's totally true and I'm not sure you want to give this much power to the first inspector who walks on the premises." He mentions the idea of an overzealous liquor inspector. These could be workplace-related issues and a whole plethora of issues that Mr. Wilson brings up.

But a very good article—I would say this was written to the assistant deputy minister as well from the Council of Ontario Construction Associations, who have raised some concerns. Their concerns were around a couple of issues.

I'll just put this on the record in the brief time that is left. Under section 9 of the act, "observing and disclosing," proposals to allow field staff acting under the authority of one statute to disclose observations that are likely—it's a very ambiguous rule, "likely"—to be relevant to another statute to a person who administers or enforces the other statute. You talk about vague language there: is likely to be affecting another statute by another person who might enforce that statute.

My question would be, on what qualification or expertise did the person make the observation? How did they know it was oil or whatever? Did they take a sample? Did someone witness the sample of the oil or whatever it was? That's kind of under the heads-up provision. Quite honestly, when you go through it, it's on that tone. I may sound a bit clinical or critical when I'm speaking to the bill, but all we're saying here is, on the general premise—repeating it for the third time—we think it's a good idea to use human resources wisely. But on the element of training, there's nothing in here I see of cross-training or other enforcement or—how would you say?—implementation issues that need to be dealt with. They may possibly be dealt with. I want to be clear on that. That's why the only thing I could do here in substance is to raise a few things that have been brought to our attention by stakeholders, and for the protection of the public and the safety and small business issues that have been mentioned, and due process so that everyone is presumed innocent until they're—their product or their company or those jobs could disappear because of some incorrect assumptions that get in the newspaper. Do you know what I'm saying? You really want to make sure there is due process here.

The Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters have commented on it. The Ontario Mining Association has commented on it. The issue of inspectors reporting across regulatory lines has business concerned that a rash of unwarranted investigations will result. That's all we need: another swarm of bureaucrats running around the small business manufacturing climate of the province, causing some concern.

We've even had input from the Osler law firm, LLP, who also characterized the potential impact on business

in the following manner. It goes on to outline the risk to disclosure of information, technically, that wasn't correct.

I think we would like to be on the record as saying we have every confidence in the public sector being able to work co-operatively, the public sector and other sectors who may in the future be performing functions in sectors that are covered by some of these statutes that may not be—if I look at some of the acts, the people working in them, they are arm's-length agencies. OMVIC, which is the motor vehicle group, does a lot of the industry regulation. They're not government employees but they—as I say, these acts, the Nutrient Management Act, the Oil, Gas and Salt Resources Act, the Public Vehicles Act, the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, the Technical Standards and Safety Authority—there's one I'd like to talk about sometime. When they show up, get out the chequebook. The travel industry, TICO, is another good one that's certainly over the Internet and other travel agencies and emergencies and things like that.

I hope they don't think there's anyone qualified, unless it's related training—I think at the end of the day it comes down to training. Most of us here don't know anything unless we've been trained in the broad areas of things we speak to, and there is a process to get briefed or to get briefing notes to find out the intention. Reading the bill itself, you look at the purpose. But this one here is a dangling participle. It goes on for five pages—actually, it's one page, to be honest.

In that respect, I think I would tend to share the information with the other members who are still here in the House to see what the next steps are for this bill. Quite frankly, I think it should go to public hearings. With that, Mr. Speaker, I would submit that those are my observations at this time of the day. Thank you for your indulgence in listening.

The Acting Speaker: It being close to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until later on this evening at 6:45.

The House adjourned at 1756.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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No. 119B

N° 119B

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 14 November 2006

Mardi 14 novembre 2006



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Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 14 November 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 14 novembre 2006

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House related to Bill 151, An Act to enact various 2006 budget measures and to enact, amend or repeal various Acts—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Someone has to call the order first.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: There's no quorum.

The Acting Speaker: Would the table ascertain if indeed there is a quorum in the House?

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much. I will once again recognize the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Speaker, I got a little bit ahead of myself, you're quite right: government notice of motion 237.

The Acting Speaker: I recognize once again the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 151, An Act to enact various 2006 Budget measures and to enact, amend or repeal various Acts, when Bill 151 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment, and at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs; and

That no deferral of the second reading vote shall be permitted; and

That the standing committee on finance and economic affairs meet on Thursday, November 23, 2006, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon and following routine proceedings for the

purpose of public hearings and clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 151; and

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the clerk of the committee shall be 12 noon on November 23, 2006. On that day, at not later than 5 p.m., those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. The committee shall be authorized to meet beyond the normal hour of adjournment until completion of clause-by-clause consideration. Any division required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 127(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House not later than Monday, November 27, 2006. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That, upon receiving the report of the standing committee on finance and economic affairs, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called on that same day; and

That, on the day the order for third reading for the bill is called, the time available for debate, up to 5:50 p.m. or 9:20 p.m., as the case may be, shall be apportioned equally among the recognized parties; and

That when the time allotted for debate has expired, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and put every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That the vote on third reading may be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceeding on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to 10 minutes.

Speaker, I so move.

1850

The Acting Speaker: Mr. Caplan has moved government notice of motion number 237. Debate? I recognize the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Lots of generous time in that for committee.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I'm pleased to be able to speak to this particular motion, 237, standing in the name, of course, of my good friend the government House leader, who notes, at the outset, allowing for significant time by a legislative committee and by this House to be able to deal with important measures arising out of the 2006 budget.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: Do you remember how much time was given for committee for the social contract?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: My colleague the government House leader asks me how much time was given to the social contract by a previous government as it moved through this Legislature. In fact, I do know the answer to that: There was no time in committee. In fact, that's quite a bit of the difference in the way that the government House leader, Mr. Bradley, and members on this side of the House treat this Legislature with the kind of respect that it deserves, to allow the opportunity for members to be able to engage in debate, to allow members to meet in committee, to be able to go through clause-by-clause consideration of bills. I'm proud that this government has opened up this Legislative Assembly to much more full debate and discussion, unlike in the nine years that I've had the privilege to serve the people of Don Valley East in this chamber.

I want you to know, Speaker, that no member on this side of the House takes the use of time allocation in the section of the standing orders lightly. I want you to know that it is only sparingly used after eight years. I remember, when I sat on that side of the House, when I sat to your left-hand side, Speaker, for eight years I watched legislation being forced down the throats of the opposition, allowing no time for committees, allowing no third reading debate, allowing nothing whatsoever reflecting the kind of principles that are contained in this motion before the House today.

I would note—and I think you may hear a great deal from members opposite—that the changes in the standing orders, the rules governing this Legislative Assembly, were originally introduced in fact by the now third party. I know that the member from Niagara Centre was a fierce proponent of supporting those rules that were brought down by then-government House leader Shelley Martel, later passed by then-government House leader Dave Cooke. But, as sparingly as they've been used by our government—as I say, in eight years we saw the kind of change of atmosphere, the kind of utilization of these rules to stifle debate, to silence the opposition, to not allow the public to have an opportunity for time in committees with members of this assembly.

I want to share with you, Speaker, and all members of this assembly some key facts that I think need to be stated at the outset of this debate. As a government, we've introduced 102 government bills. Eighty-three of those bills have been passed; in only 14 has time allocation been a necessity. This government, the McGuinty government, has time-allocated fewer bills than any government since it was introduced in 1990, and considerably fewer than my colleagues in the official opposition,

the Tories, who time-allocated a whopping 102 bills. We've introduced 102 bills. Eighty-three bills have passed without it. The previous government time-allocated 102 bills. As a government, in total, we've time-allocated about 7%. I think all members would agree that that's a rather modest amount in order to make sure that key legislation like Bill 151 does reach legislative fruition, does become enacted.

I would contrast that with my colleagues, now in the official opposition, who time-allocated almost 50%, almost half, of the bills that they introduced: time-allocated, prevented debate, no committee hearings. That's quite a contrast. You might hear a little bit from the members opposite, moaning and crying, complaining and caterwauling, but I only ask you to compare the record. Compare what has happened previously to the current state. In fact, the Eves government in 2002 used time allocation on 75%, a full three quarters, of the bills they passed. In 2003 they allowed for no committee and no third reading debate whenever time allocation, this method, was used. Speaker, you would remember those days well. I know that you were on this side at that time, but you would remember those days well.

So let me be very clear: This government, on this side of the House, Premier McGuinty in a position of leadership, has told us and has set a tone of respect, respect for all members of this House, to allow as much opportunity for debate as possible. I want you to know that we're not going back to the NDP days or the Conservative days of just using these kinds of tools at will and at random, but only in very limited circumstances, only when it's necessary.

I certainly point to the contrasts between previous governments, the way the rules around this chamber and around this place were changed unilaterally by the New Democrats when they had the privilege of serving to your right hand, sir. I note that we use this measure sparingly because of the belief in full and as much opportunity for members to participate in debate and opportunities for the public to engage legislative committees. We, as a fundamental sign of our respect, use the rules as have been passed and introduced by previous governments, but we use them quite sparingly. I want to stress that the key is the respect that we show this Legislature, the respect that we show members of this Legislature and, ultimately, the respect that we show the citizens and the residents of Ontario whom we are here to represent.

I want to urge all members to support this motion, to support government notice of motion 237. I want to request that all members support Bill 151: progressive legislation; legislation that would modernize the Liquor Control Act and the LCBO; legislation that would introduce tax increment financing, an innovative tool to invest in infrastructure; legislation that is much needed; changes that are needed; investment that is needed, helping us to raise the quality of life in a province literally that is second to none.

Speaker, I thank you and I will listen intently to the debate as members choose to engage.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate on the motion?

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm not pleased to participate in a time allocation motion because it indicates that the government is prepared to shut down debate on a substantive piece of legislation before the House, but so be it. We're dealing with a majority Liberal government—Liberal McGuinty government—that has chosen to ignore not only its commitments to the people of Ontario through its various campaign promises that Mr. McGuinty and his colleagues so arrogantly choose to ignore, but they fully expect that the electorate forgives them as well for not keeping their promises, and now we move on. It's interesting, at a time when the government has also introduced proposed legislation to deal with democratic reform, that at the same time and in the same session this government introduces time allocation that essentially says to members of the House, "We don't want to hear from you anymore. We're going to limit the amount of debate that you're going to have." And so I will use the time that I have to speak to the bill that is being time-allocated.

1900

I have but a few minutes, but I want to speak to it from the perspective of my responsibilities in this House as critic for education. In that regard, I want to get to the heart of what I believe is going to be a hallmark of this government, and that is that they have a great penchant for making public announcements that on the surface are most attractive and as a result are pronounced with great fanfare and attract a great deal of applause, but as time goes on, stakeholders, taxpayers, find out that that is what it is: It is simply the art of spin and it has nothing at all to do with integrity of governing.

Nowhere is that more profoundly seen than in education, and for a Premier who has taken on the self-proclaimed mantle of the education Premier, I find this most offensive. I want to point out to members, and particularly members of the government, who probably have not read this bill, because most members of the government rely on the crib notes that are given them by the ministers of the day to simply stand in their place and recount—

Interjection.

Mr. Klees: Well, the member from Essex, I would ask you to tell me, if you would, what schedule Z.8 stands for. What does it really mean to the taxpayers of Ontario? Mr. Crozier goes back to his BlackBerry rather than responding.

Let me, Speaker, tell Mr. Crozier what in fact this schedule, hidden in this document—hidden in the final slim pages of this document we have schedule Z.8, Teachers' Pension Act. Now, here's what is very interesting about this. We're talking about a financial document. We're talking about legislation that authorizes the government to do certain things relating to finances in this province. I want to read into the record this section of this legislation.

Under 1(1) it talks about, "Section 5 of the Teachers' Pension Act is amended by adding the following subsection," and it says in subsection (8):

"Despite subsection (1.1), the total amount of contributions payable in respect of 2008 by the Minister of Education and the employers who contribute under the pension plan may exceed the amount of contributions payable by or on behalf of active plan members in respect of credited service for that year."

That sounds innocent enough, doesn't it? The fact of the matter is that what this section of the legislation does is allow the government to make up the unfunded liability in the teachers' pension fund. You may say, "Well, that's fine. What does that mean?" Well, here's what it means: The unfunded liability in the teachers' pension fund, depending on how the calculations are done, ranges anywhere from \$21 billion to \$31 billion. That's \$21 billion to \$31 billion. And essentially what the government is doing is saying, "We're going to prepare ourselves here to take on the responsibility of making up that unfunded liability." What they're not telling you is how much that unfunded liability is going to be and what the impact is going to be to the taxpayer.

While we're talking about education, I want to point out to the public that while we have a government and a Premier here who continue to tell us that all is well in public education, that is not what is really happening here. I rose in the Legislature on May 5, 2005, and in a question to the Premier I made the following statement. I'm going to quote from Hansard. I spoke about the commitments that the government was making to the salaries of teachers in this province. I was not arguing at all about the level of the contracts and the level of pay; teachers are well worth what they are getting paid in this province. What I was challenging was whether, in fact, the government was prepared to fund the contracts that they had negotiated. At that point I said to the Premier, "Will you guarantee that the funding for teachers' salaries will not come out of other envelopes within the education budget?" Well, the Premier came back with his very direct response: "The member opposite is just really, really stretching on this one. It takes a lot of creativity to turn what is an absolutely wonderful news story for Ontario students into something negative." During that entire exchange on this very issue of underfunding those contracts that had been negotiated by the government, he insisted that that was not the case.

Well, here we are: Fast-forward to October 20, 2006. This is from the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation media release. I was at the press conference. Here is what the teachers' union said about the McGuinty government:

"The funding crisis facing Ontario's school boards has forced many to balance their budgets for 2006-07 by dipping into reserves and cutting programs, services, and front-line personnel. In a few boards, trustees have flatly refused to take these steps to balance their budgets, pointing to a flawed provincial funding formula that must be fixed....

"A substantial portion of all new education funding has been earmarked for specific ministry initiatives and has not helped boards cover the funding shortfall for core

operating expenses. And even when the government did add \$600 million to the education budget last spring to bridge the funding gap for teacher salaries, it did so at the expense of the local priorities and learning opportunities grants.’”

What I want to point out to people in this province is that they’re dealing here with a government that is better than any before at the art of the spin. They are excellent communicators when it comes to making press conferences and media releases and fresh announcements about the wonderful things they’re going to do for education. But what they have been doing is making new program announcements without providing the fundamental accountable planning and fiscal resourcing of those announcements. That’s why, contrary to what the Premier would have us believe and contrary to what the Minister of Education would have us believe, education is not in a good state in this province. Multi-billion dollars of shortfall exist in this province in the education file, and we are starting to see the results of that.

1910

I want to point out that while we continue to hear the rhetoric from the education minister that the funding formula needs fixing, we also continue to hear from the Minister of Education that they will eventually review that funding formula. Well, that funding formula was reviewed extensively by a third party by the name of Rozanski. This report was presented after extensive review—province-wide review—in response to the previous government, which understood very well that reform of the student-based funding formula was a work in progress, that it was not static and that changes and adjustments would have to be made to that funding formula based on the changes in demographics within our school system and to keep up with those circumstances.

This report, the Rozanski report, commissioned by the previous government, was accepted and adopted by the previous government. I might remind the government that the previous government made the commitment to implement fully the Rozanski report, which would have infused an additional \$1.8 billion into the foundation of the funding formula over a period of three years and would have adopted all the recommended changes that would have made up for many of the shortfalls that were in the original funding formula document. The review has been done, and I might also remind the government that while they were on the campaign trail, they promised to implement Rozanski, albeit on a shortfall of \$1.6 billion over four years. The previous government made the commitment to implement at \$1.8 billion over three years. Stakeholders in education today know that all this government would have to do is implement Rozanski, a comprehensive review of \$1.8 billion, make the fundamental changes, and our education funding would be in a very different state than it is today.

I submit that this government is being caught short. It understands; they know what has to be done. We’re going to hold their feet to the fire: Implement Rozanski,

get on with funding education, get on with reforming the basic funding formula for education in this province.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): First of all—

Mr. Kormos: Give ’em hell, Ms. DiNovo.

Ms. DiNovo: Oh, I’ll try. First of all, to motion 237, one notes the language. It’s pretty commanding and directive language for a democratic process: “That no deferral of the second reading vote shall be permitted”; “at not later than 5 p.m.”; “not later than Monday, November 27”; “necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment”; and finally, “That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to 10 minutes.” One wonders at the strength of language from a government that I recall debating Bill 28, a little nine-page bill which was really an amendment to the blood services act. It took them almost a year to get it through; it’s still in process. One has to wonder about the hurry that Bill 151 is accorded when other bills are left to languish—I can think of a number of examples of those.

But before I get to why they might want to ram this bill through without due process and due debate, let’s take a little fun walk down memory lane, shall we? I’d like to quote from Hansard, first of all, Mr. Caplan himself, the honourable member from whom we just heard. On November 21, 2001, Mr. Caplan said, “I usually start off my remarks by saying it’s a pleasure to speak to something on behalf of the people of Don Valley East, but it really isn’t. This is yet another closure motion, a gag order on the Legislature. How could it ever be a pleasure to speak to that, when that’s the normal course of action and when this Legislature is shut down for the very purpose it was meant for, which was to discuss important matters?” That’s what is happening here today. People who are going to be watching this on television will see a banner on their screen which says “a motion for time allocation.” It’s closure, plain and simple. Thank you, Mr. Caplan, for that.

We move on to Mr. Sorbara. This is December 3, 2001. He said, “I stand here today to condemn this time allocation motion and to say to you that—let me put it this way—governments are defeated for two reasons: one, because of what they do, because of the policies they bring forward and the things they do to the people of a place like Ontario, and the second reason they are defeated is the way in which they go about doing them.... This time allocation motion is just another example of why people are so anxious to get to the ballot box in a general election and send them packing.” We might live to see that. Then, to continue, Mr. Sorbara, 3 December 2001: “That’s why this time allocation motion is such a tragedy. I certainly will be voting against it.”

To continue, on 11 December 2001, Mr. Bradley, from Hansard again—Hansard is wonderful, isn’t it?

Mr. Kormos: Not Jim Bradley.

Ms. DiNovo: Absolutely Jim Bradley. He said, “How I wish we didn’t have to debate this time allocation

motion....” I think I’m speaking for a number of members here tonight on that one. I simply want to say that once again we see the government using its iron fist on the opposition. Well, one might ask whose iron fist this time. Then, he continues on November 28: “Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity, unfortunately, to speak on yet another time allocation motion. That is a motion, of course, where debate is choked off in the Legislative Assembly by the dictum of the government; that’s most unfortunate, but it does happen only too often.” Mr. Bradley continues—and not a fan was he of time allocation motions, apparently—on 3 December 2001: “I too will be opposing the time allocation motion....”

I think more and more people should realize that this Legislature has become largely irrelevant in the democratic process in Ontario. The member who served in a period of time from 1985-95 probably didn’t recognize the rules when he came back, how badly they’ve been mangled so that the House has become just about irrelevant. That’s unfortunate for all of us in the House. The government whip over there mumbles and grumbles in a gruff voice about this, but I tell him, if you ever have the opportunity to sit on this side of the House—and he has—you’ll find out what I’m talking about and why it’s relevant.

He continues, on 10 June 2002: “I’m disappointed to see that we’re into a time allocation on a bill of this kind. I really think that had the Legislature come back earlier, had the Legislature not been absent from sitting from the middle of December until the very middle of May, we would have had lots of time to be able to deal with this legislation. I know that many of my colleagues feel the same way....

“I always deplore the fact that I have to speak on a time allocation motion. I would prefer to be talking about several important issues that could come before the House....”

But not these three members only; we continue on. Mrs. Dombrowsky, 2002, again speaking about time allocation motions—at this point, of course, they were in opposition: “I have to say that it is with regret that I have to stand in my place again today to speak to yet another time allocation motion. I think the point I would like to stress in this debate is that this is probably one of the most significant issues that this House will consider in terms of business on behalf of the people of the province of Ontario. The bill was introduced a little more than a week ago and already the government has moved to close debate on this most significant issue.” One wonders if Mrs. Dombrowsky couldn’t be saying the same thing tonight on this side of the House as well.

She goes on: “Here we go again. Sadly, again, we’re here debating a time allocation motion.

“Sadly, again I stand to speak to a time allocation motion. As a member who was elected ... I really thought that as a voice for the people of my part of Ontario I would have a reasonable opportunity to speak on their behalf and make points on behalf of the people of

Hastings–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, as well as the perspective of Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party. Here we are again addressing another time allocation motion on a matter of great importance to the people of Ontario.” I can’t think of a matter of much greater importance than a budget bill.

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Continuing along—because of course these honourable members are not alone, Mr. Gerretsen himself said in Hansard, on June 11, 2003, “It is shutting off debate,” which of course is exactly what this motion is designed to do. “We’ve got many, many members on this side of the House who want the opportunity to speak on this bill, and that’s being denied.”

He continued, “Closure is not the way a democratically elected Parliament should operate.”

He continued: “I’m pleased to join this debate.... Actually, I’m not pleased with the subject matter we’re dealing with, which is, of course, another time allocation motion. I know people have heard this before, but I think it’s absolutely outrageous the number of times this particular government has used closure, in which it’s cutting off”—this, of course, is what the government is doing—“the parliamentary debate that we believe in with our democratic system.”

He went on, in 2002: “We are losing our parliamentary democracy in this province.... Do not use time allocation again.”

Again, on June 26, 2002: “I’m pleased to wind up the debate on this time allocation motion. Actually, I’m not pleased. I don’t like time allocation motions. Basically it’s an undemocratic move by the government to invoke closure. We’ve seen it time after time.”

My, how some things change and still remain the same.

Again, not to leave any member out—Mr. Levac, on November 25, 2002: “First, in a nutshell, time allocation itself, the reality of what time allocation means: basically, the stopping of debate....

“It’s a new device with which this government has been stifling democracy....

“Stop the closure stuff.”

He continued: “I rise with some consternation as to whether or not speaking to this bill will have an impact on the government’s decision to use time allocation, so what I want to do first is explain very clearly to the people that time allocation is a tactic used by governments that simply want to remove the opportunity for too much debate”—it’s very eloquent—“for one of two reasons: they’re fearful of what might be said, or they need to better manage their time in terms of how the legislative agenda and calendar has come apart. So whether it’s the first one or the second one, it’s really irrelevant because the fact is the government shows it’s doing one of two things. It’s either not listening to the people out there ... or this government’s agenda is falling apart and they just simply have to get this legislation passed to prove that they’ve done some work, without

any dedication to finding out whether or not the people out there truly want to debate this issue.”

I think that’s the best one. Don’t you? I think that one should be framed. Absolutely. I could not agree more.

The question becomes: Why do they want to rush this particular bill through? What’s in it and what’s not in it?

First of all, what’s in this bill? Well, there’s a lot in this bill, of course. As one of my colleagues said, it’s good material to read if you happen to suffer from insomnia.

One colleague, Mr. Prue, who has done extensive work on the MPAC system and its lack of comprehension and lack of logic, notices that here is some attempt to deal with that by not dealing with it in the bill, which is to say, to put the whole issue on hold. Mr. Prue goes on to discuss what could be done—what should have been done—if one had followed the recommendations of our eminent Ombudsman and done something about it instead of putting the issue on hold until after the next election. Again I’m going to quote from Hansard, when he’s talking about what they’re doing with MPAC: “The other one is rather bizarre. The other one is forcing MPAC to release the information upon which its computer model is based. I don’t know why that takes two years of study either.”

He’s talking about a recommendation. That’s a good question: Why does it take two years of study to not only put in place these recommendations but just to release information upon which its computer model is based?

I have people coming into my constituency office, as I’m sure we all do, who want to know a simple reality; that is, how MPAC arrived at their assessment. I had a couple come in who have bachelor apartments they bought, really pieds-à-terre for downtown use, that have just been assessed at the rate of commercial hotel rooms for \$8,000 a year apiece and more. These are 400-square-foot bachelor units, \$8,000 a year. All they want to know is how they arrived at these seemingly outrageous assessments, but this bill doesn’t do that. It doesn’t attempt to answer that. It simply defers the entire debate. One wonders really why one would want to rush that through.

It does other things, though, too. It does things like tax ethanol. Again one might ask, for a government that says it’s on the side of the environment, why would they want to tax ethanol the way they tax gasoline? That’s a very strange move for a seemingly clean-burning fuel.

Another aspect of this bill that I think is most important—it’s interesting, just to digress for a moment, that here we’ve been asking for a number of moves from this government and we’ve been told over and over again in this House—it’s becoming a refrain—“We’re working on it; we’re working on it. We know there’s more to be done. We’re working on it.” I’ve lost count of the number of times I’ve heard that over education, health, arts funding, the flawed funding formula, you name it. On a number of issues we’ve heard, “We’re working on it. We’re working on it.” Well, since 2003 they’ve been working on it, yet somehow, tonight, all of a sudden, there’s a sense of urgency in the House. All of

a sudden, tonight, we have to move so quickly that we have to close off debate. We can’t discuss this bill with any due process or any depth. We have to move right ahead.

Just a little earlier this evening, I had the pleasure of speaking at an arts day forum, and there were a number of artists here—the Ontario Arts Council, among others. Fiona Reid was in our gallery this afternoon—a great honour to us all. What they’d like to know is, where is the status-of-the-artist legislation? Not only where is the status-of-the-artist legislation, but where is the report that would lead to the status-of-the-artist legislation? We have our Minister of Culture, on May 15, on the record, saying that that was going to be imminent. We had that as a promise in the election in 2003, yet nothing, absolutely nothing, has been delivered in that venue. So again, obviously there’s no sense of urgency there. There’s no necessity to invoke closure about ramming through status-of-the-artist legislation.

There’s no sense of urgency for all of those people who are working below the poverty line at 40 hours a week and making \$7.75 an hour, many of them making less than they would on welfare with children. There’s no urgency to deal with that, to invoke closure around that and to ram some solution through for that.

We have 65,000 people waiting for affordable housing in the city, 122,000 households in the province. We have, as you heard Mr. Prue say this afternoon when there was a memorial unveiled again, those who are dying on our streets, one or two a week. There is no sense of urgency. There is no need to invoke closure about bringing in some housing policies or building the housing, the 20,000 units that were promised, even though we know they’re sitting on \$400 million. There’s no sense of urgency there. No, they’re working on that one; they’re working on it. Studies are being done, presumably. Committees are sitting somewhere, trying to decide when the shovel will go in the ground about that. No sense of urgency there.

There’s no sense of urgency, no sense of the need to invoke closure and limit debate around the fact that this government claws back the national child supplement. That’s \$200 million of federal money, and it’s from the backs of our poorest children, a move that should be considered appalling and disgusting. There’s no urgency on behalf of the children who are suffering in this province. There’s no urgency there to do something about the clawback, and again and again we’ve asked about that.

There’s no urgency to deal with the fact that our tuition fees have gone up 26%. There’s no urgency there to again invoke closure, to rush things through with this kind of bill around freezing the tuition fees, which you remember was the promise. There’s no urgency there.

We stand here in the House, in a province with a poverty rate of 15%. That compares most unfavourably with other jurisdictions. I think in particular of Ireland, where it’s 4%. There’s no urgency to deal with the poverty rate at 15%. These are real people; these are not just

statistics. There's no urgency to deal with a poverty rate that we should be ashamed of. There's no urgency there.

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There's not even any urgency, I've noticed, to really speak with any openness in this House about the \$40 billion that they're going to be spending on nuclear reactors, about which, I have to say, as I was knocking on doors campaigning in Parkdale-High Park during the by-election, I was met with horror at those same doors. There's no urgency to discuss that in depth, to look at the ramifications of what it would mean to spend that much money on nuclear reactors in a province when perhaps we should be reusing and recycling and looking at windmills and other forms of energy generation. There's no urgency there.

There's no urgency to deal with tenant issues in this province, even though we know that we don't have real rent control and that we're in real danger of losing affordable housing stock as it stands right now. In my own riding, we have about 10,000 units of privately held affordable housing stock that is in imminent danger of being lost. This is due to gentrification and the rise in real estate prices. There's no urgency there to bring in real rent control that would stay with the unit, not with the tenant. There's no urgency there.

In meeting with the police today, another group that came and that we honour today—we all went and enjoyed their food and their reception—there's no urgency there to deal with a serious shortfall in funding in our police departments. I went out on a drive-around on Friday night with 14 division—it was an honour to do so—and I was horrified at what I saw: a crumbling old building, short-staffed, emergency calls coming over the computer and no cars to send out to meet those emergency calls.

There is no urgency in dealing with the crumbling infrastructure of our cities. There's no urgency to invoke closure and a lack of debate about that so we can rush to a solution.

We would love to rush to solutions on any of those topics. Personally, I know in my riding it would be wonderful if this government acted more quickly. It would be wonderful if this government invoked this kind of motion over all of those kinds of bills that we would love to see given legs and given teeth, put into play. But no, a huge majority, money in the bank, and yet no will to really move on those issues of substance that affect the lives of people in all of our ridings.

I'm going to turn the floor over and leave some time for my honourable colleague. But perhaps it's good to stop the way I started, with that wonderful quote from my colleague across the floor, Mr. Levac, who said, when he described what a closure motion does, that it stifles debate and that it's done for only one of two reasons: "It's either not listening to the people out there ... or this government's agenda is falling apart and they just simply have to get this legislation passed to prove that they've done some work, without any dedication to finding out

whether or not the people out there truly want to debate this issue."

I'll leave it at that and ask: Do we want action? Absolutely. Do we want a limit on the debate on some motions? Why not? But not this motion; not this night. We want action on all of those other issues that really affect those people in our ridings.

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): For those of you at home who may be watching, you might say, "What is it that they're talking about here? Are we debating a bill?" We're not debating a bill. We're talking about a motion to end debate on a bill. You may say, "Why would you want to end debate on a bill?" Well, this is Bill 151, the Budget Measures Act, and you have a wide degree of latitude in what you want to talk about. So if you've been following this at home, you may think, "What are all of these people discussing? What is this Bill 151? What's it all about?"

Among the things in it:

—A new enhanced dividend tax credit to encourage investment in Ontario corporations. Is anybody against that? Not that I've heard.

—The enhancement of the interactive digital media tax credit: a wonderful thing for our arts community, and not terribly controversial.

—Giving municipalities more flexibility and additional provincial support in funding brownfield redevelopment and public infrastructure. Nobody is here complaining about that. In fact, people would be saying, "Well, what are you debating about? Get on with it."

—Increasing the income threshold of the Ontario property and sales tax credits for senior couples. So all the folks at home who are thinking, "We're getting a little on in years and we'd kind of like to stay in our home; maybe it would be possible for us to get a little bit of a break so that we can stay in our home a little longer," that's what Bill 151 is about. That's why we want to get on with it.

The balance of the things of substance in here, most people would say—okay, excluding income received under the federal universal child care benefit from eligibility calculations for the Ontario property and sales tax credits, da-dah, da-dah, da-dah—the rest of it, as my colleague from Parkdale-High Park said, is truly a non-prescription cure for insomnia. There's nothing here that's controversial. That's why we want to get on with it. A budget measure is a motion of confidence in the government, which is what this one is, and it's a measure that says, "Let's get on with it." That's what this one does. It says, "Enough debate." If this were happening in a boardroom, people would say, "There's nothing here that's in any way controversial. Pass it. Move on to something of more substance." The previous speaker, my colleague from Parkdale-High Park, was talking about an awful lot of things that this House needs to address. But before we can do it, let's dispose of this bill, and that's what this one is about.

Just before going on to some remarks I want to make on the bill: My colleague raised a rhetorical point. She

said, "Why does it take two years of study to alter a computer model for the Municipal Property Assessment Corp.? I used to be a software engineer. I did websites for small companies before I was elected. Just to put a little perspective on it, the best software company in the world is Microsoft. You say, why does it take two years to alter a computer model at MPAC that, admittedly, will affect several million dwellings and properties in Ontario? At Microsoft, where 9,000 full-time employees work on a single product—that's Windows—it took fully not two years, not three or four years but five years to move from the last operating system, which you've probably got on your computer—Windows XP—to the next operating system, which will be on your computer when you buy a new one next year: Windows Vista. The thing with software is that you don't have to get it perfect. You've got to get it right. That's what this is about. This is not about getting it perfect, because people here are very fallible; this is about getting it right. Getting it right, especially on a budget measure, means that a government can keep its commitments. For me in western Mississauga, my government keeping its commitments means that I get to keep my commitments to the people who sent me here to work on their behalf. Getting it right, passing a budget measure like this, being able to get on with the next set of priorities, means that we can finish the job we started at the Lisgar GO train station. We announced it in 2005. We're breaking ground this year. We're going to be getting on the train next year. That's what it means to keep your commitment.

Getting it right, getting on with it, means that at the Credit Valley Hospital, where we desperately need new capital infrastructure for a hospital that hasn't been able to materially expand since it first opened 21 years ago—this bill will allow us to allocate the funds to break the ground, to start the steel work in 2007, on schedule, get building the hospital, and look after the expectant moms who come in there and want to deliver their babies in one of the best hospitals in Ontario. That's Credit Valley Hospital.

Getting on with it means that we can pursue debate on Bill 124. For all of you out there who were trained in another country, who built your careers or your experience in another country, getting on with it means that we can debate Bill 124 and we can pass that measure to enable Ontario's regulated professions to effectively, transparently, economically and in a timely way convert your credentials, your experience and your certifications to their Canadian equivalent.

In western Mississauga, getting on with it means that the Minister for Public Infrastructure Renewal can push forward on his plans and we can debate them at length in this House. Those plans include, among other things to help us in western Mississauga in the years to come, a third track on the Milton GO line. That's what this is all about. That's why we've time-allocated this bill. This bill truly is a non-prescription sedative. There's nothing in here that anybody quarrels with, and that's why it's time-allocated—not so that we can sit here and take up the

people's time in their Legislature, in this wonderful place that all of us have the privilege and the responsibility of coming here to serve; not so that we can debate, in a very sterile fashion, things that we all agree on, and we all agree on everything that's in this particular Budget Measures Act. Let's just get on with it. It would be the same thing in your company, when you're debating the trivia: Get on with it. That's what a time allocation motion is about.

This is not the government that we had the last time around that time-allocated everything. In this government we've time-allocated—what was it that the Minister for Public Infrastructure Renewal said earlier?

1940

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Seven per cent.

Mr. Delaney: Seven per cent of our bills. That's one in 14, not 70. Seven per cent. What are the ones that get time-allocated? Frankly, if you're members of the opposition, you're not going to vote for a government budget bill, so you'll drag that debate out as long as you can. The government has taken bills to committee and we have debated them, including this one here, Bill 151. I've spoken to it in the House. We've debated it at length, and it's time to get on with it. That's what this time allocation motion is all about. It's a time allocation motion that says to the members of this House, "We've talked about it. There's not that much here that's controversial. We are in accord with its basic principles. Let's get on with it."

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): It's a pleasure to speak on this time allocation motion, which has been described by some members—I think more recently by the member from Parkdale-High Park, who put on the record a number of comments that were made by the then opposition, the Liberal members. They were commenting on this abuse of parliamentary process, that it was actually sort of undemocratic, and made a lot of outrageous comments. In fact, they should look in the mirror, because this bill, Bill 151, that's being time-allocated, is indeed one of more powerful bills. This bill is actually a budget measures bill and in its own context is very much a work in progress, I would say. If you look at it, and for the members, I believe this has some 25 schedules—35, actually—and it also has some subschedules from A to Z.9. It's very long and convoluted. If you look at the beginning, which is normally the preamble or the purpose section of the bill, it's a work in progress for sure.

If you just start to read through it and look at some of the schedules, you start to find out that now you understand that this is—how would you describe it?—exempting full debate on a very primary and important issue. That's what this is about. They're ramming this through. I would say that the members who have spoken on it would probably agree. I wouldn't want to attribute anything to them, but it's a very complex bill amending many, many statutes and other schedules.

There are a couple here that are worthy of just a few comments in the brief time I have. I think it's in one of the first sections. Let me just look at the bill here. It's actually in schedule A of the Assessment Act. It says,

"Currently, the Assessment Act governs the assessment of land for the purposes of municipal and school taxes. Amendments throughout the act provide, in addition, for the assessment of land in non-municipal territory"—that's provincial governance there—"for the purposes of taxes levied under the Provincial Land Tax Act, 2006." That's actually more revenue. What's the accountability on the expenditure side of that new revenue they're going to get? To some extent, these unorganized territories are being funded in some way today, and now they're going to ultimately raise the taxes.

There are two or three things in here. There's another one you need to be aware of.

Ring of cell phone.

Mr. O'Toole: The phone is ringing.

Under paragraph 6 of section 3(1)—

Mr. Mario Sergio (York West): Pick up your phone. Somebody's calling you, John.

Mr. O'Toole: Yes, well, you really should be listening a little more accurately.

Time allocation—they're not even respecting the debate. Here they are playing with their cellphones. This is the arrogance that's starting to creep into the Liberal caucus. I see it and I sense it, if you go back to the history and how they were so indignant about the time when we were in government and now. But this section here is quite interesting too. It says that "land used and occupied by a public hospital that receives provincial aid under the Public Hospitals Act is exempt from tax." So these are properties that are provincial institutional situations and they're exempt from tax. Also, children's treatment centres are exempted from tax. Who's going to make up that revenue loss for the municipality? That's obsequious downloading, in my view. We have also land use by veterans; these would be Legions for the most part. There was an exemption under the current Assessment Act for municipalities to exempt certain property classes or members of property classes. And there are retroactivity provisions in this bill, which is another trademark Liberal scheme.

I would say that what's most troubling is two things: First of all, it's a large and complex bill, and secondly, it's being time-allocated. As the member from Parkdale-High Park quoted, a number of then-opposition members—I should be clear on that: They were then-opposition members, and I should name them: Caplan, Bradley, Dombrowsky, Gerretsen, and the list goes on. But quite honestly, the more recent one was Mr. Levac, now the government whip. And they said it's symptomatic of a government that's not listening, an agenda that's failing the people. I think that's exactly what this evidence is speaking to.

What is more troubling, if you look even to the commentaries on the economy in Ontario, is we've got hundreds of thousands of job losses in the manufacturing sector, including in the pulp and paper sector in the north and all across the province, and they have no plan to deal with this decline in the fundamentals of the economy, the manufacturing sector.

Now, I wouldn't want anyone to take my word for it. I'm just going to quote or reference one article here. This is in the Toronto Star of October 9; it's a Liberal-friendly paper. Many refer to it as the Liberal briefing notes. It's an article by Ian Urquhart, and it's "Sorbara's Leaky Fiscal Projections Grim Omen for Liberals." I think we've struck upon it. This is why they're ramming this through, time-allocating it, limiting debate, a fulsome discussion of these many things, reviewing property assessment and freezing assessment for three years until after the election, pushing the trouble out. I would just put that it's worth recognizing that even some revered economists like the Toronto Dominion Bank revised provincial economic forecasts last month. The Toronto Dominion Bank summed up the situation neatly, "For the manufacturing-based economies of central Canada and some parts of the Atlantic that have recently struggled under the weight of a high Canadian dollar and elevated energy prices," both of which have been caused by this government, "the dampening influence of weaker demand growth Stateside"—that's the US economy sliding, the housing sector etc.—"has effectively quashed hopes of any meaningful recovery"—in the Ontario economy—"until 2008."

Their forecasts are out by almost one complete point, and for every point in GDP, if it goes down one point in the GDP—and people are listening—it means, in real revenue loss, about \$600 million to \$700 million. But actually there's an implication for the expenditure side too, because people need retraining and redevelopment, and you need to make investments. So you've got the loss of revenue of \$600 million plus additional expenditures—for every point, it's about \$1 billion of adjustment in the economy.

This article goes on—and I would say that the Toronto Dominion Bank economist is one of the more respected economists, and he's citing "Sorbara's Leaky Fiscal Projections Grim Omen for Liberals" in Ontario. That's only one part of the story. They're rushing this through. They're time-allocating it because they don't want the people of Ontario to know that they're in trouble. They're doing what Mr. Levac said in his remarks when they were in opposition. He's saying that the plan is not working and they're running for cover. I'm seriously disappointed that a government, especially with a budget bill, would take these measures to stifle the democratic process.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It's a delight for me to have the opportunity to make some comments on this bill this evening and on closure. There are a number of positive things. I had the opportunity to be in Peterborough last week during constituency week and talk to a number of particular seniors who are delighted that we are increasing the income threshold for Ontario property and sales tax credits that certainly benefit our seniors to a great extent.

It's interesting. I heard comments from my colleagues to the right of me. I remember, as a member of city council between 1990 and 1995, when the then government of

Mr. Rae, under the social contract—I believe it was Bill 158—

Mr. Kormos: That's your Bob Rae as Liberal leader. 1950

Mr. Leal: I don't support him. I want to indicate very clearly to my colleague from Niagara South that I'm not supporting Mr. Rae.

But let me tell you about Bill 58; let's talk about Bill 58 for a moment. Now, that was an interesting piece of legislation, because it took virtually every contract with public sector workers in the province of Ontario and went just like this: Threw them out the door. I remember talking to firefighters and police officers and teachers and my good friends who were employed at public works in the city of Peterborough and how let down they were by Premier Rae and members of the cabinet. Four of them are still sitting in this caucus. I'd like to get on the record who they were. The member from Trinity-Spadina was part of the executive council then. The member from Timmins-James Bay was a member of that executive council. The member from Kenora-Rainy River was part of that executive council, as was the member from Nickel Belt.

Let's talk about the mechanics of Bill 58 for a bit—one of the most draconian pieces of legislation that was ever brought forward in this Legislature. There were no public hearings: wham, bam, it was through the House, and, as I said, ripped up all the collective bargaining agreements in the province of Ontario.

Interjection.

Mr. Leal: To those public servants who remember those very dark days, we like to remind them from time to time what happened during that period of time.

It's interesting when you look at some of the schedules that are included in this bill.

Interjection.

Mr. Leal: I've hit a sore point. They don't like to be reminded about Bill 58 and that social contract.

One of the reasons why we need to move on with this piece of legislation and bring in time allocation is because there are a number of important bills that are still on the docket that are of great importance to the people in the province of Ontario. I'd like to talk about Bill 152 for a moment, the bill that was brought forward by my colleague the Minister of Government Services. Last week I had the opportunity to meet with a number of citizens' groups in the riding of Peterborough. They're certainly very concerned about mortgage fraud and identity theft. Two of the key elements that are in Bill 152 deal with mortgage fraud and identity theft. Certainly, the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford has done a good job to highlight those concerns. Hopefully, this bill will go to committee—an opportunity to have some hearings and some amendments. But it's an issue that is of real concern to many seniors in the province of Ontario and is certainly highlighted by a number of newspaper articles that have appeared in the media showing a number of very innocent people who have witnessed the greatest investment they make in purchasing a home destroyed

through mortgage fraud and indeed sometimes theft of their identity.

There are a number of other initiatives in here, such as the universal child credit benefit. Ontarians who qualify for their new federal UCCB will get to keep the benefits they're entitled to receive under the Ontario property and sales tax credits and the Ontario child care supplement for working families. We believe this is an important initiative to support families with young children as such. The UCCB should not affect a family's eligibility for assistance from the province.

There's the Canadian Public Accountability Board, and some changes for taxes in the province of Ontario.

We have brought in a two-year freeze for assessments in the province of Ontario, certainly an opportunity to look at current value assessment, which was brought in in 1998. To be fair, one of the premises for bringing in CVA in 1998 was that there was a great discrepancy in assessments here in Toronto, where at the time homes in Rosedale, a part of Toronto, were assessed at a 1950 level, and I know my friends from Scarborough experienced a situation where many of the newer homes in Scarborough were assessed in 1980. We had homes of similar size, one being in Rosedale, one being in Scarborough, and the assessments were dramatically different. So the government of the day looked at that problem and thought that it might be resolved by bringing in current value assessment to have more equalization of assessment across the province of Ontario.

But indeed, what has happened—I know that in my riding, we've seen a spike in recreational properties, particularly in areas where those who have the financial means are prepared to pay a substantial premium to acquire a property. What happens through CVA is that that increased cost of a property ripples through other properties in the area, because CVA is based on the premise of a willing seller, a willing buyer, and that is the way properties are assessed through the computer modelling. So during these two years, through the assessment freeze, there will be a number of real opportunities to look at some of the problems that have cropped up since 1998 and come up with some solutions to make the CVA system much more transparent and indeed fair. It may mean that we might have to bring in a number of classes within CVA to try to smooth out the spikes that we've seen on some properties across the province of Ontario.

The other issue: We are taking some time to review who does what, the exchange of services, the financing of those services, between the government of Ontario and municipalities. We have made substantial progress. We have uploaded land ambulance and public health. We have provided increased financial dollars through the move ahead program and an opportunity to strengthen the fiscal position of many municipalities across the province of Ontario. But more needs to be done.

In fact, one way that we'll be able to address the \$3-billion fiscal imbalance between municipalities and the provincial government is to solve the fiscal imbalance that we have currently with the federal government. It

has been estimated that, of the recent paydown of debt, some \$13 billion, about 40% of that figure was generated by the hard-working men and women in the province of Ontario. So as we move forward, hopefully all provincial Premiers will have a positive dialogue and ongoing discussions with the federal government, and that we can come to grips to address that fiscal imbalance, where the provinces have the responsibility for delivering many of the big-ticket items such as health care and education. We know that in fiscal 2006-07 the government of Ontario will spend about \$35 billion in the province of Ontario.

Over the last three years, I think it's fair to say, we've been fairly selective in using time-allocation motions, and we've used them sparingly. When you look at the record of the previous eight years of Progressive Conservative administration and go back to the Hampton-Rae government between 1990 and 1995—when you compare those records, we compare very favourably with the use of time allocation motions.

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One of the reasons we are bringing it forward: As I said, there are a number of other major legislative initiatives that we need to move through and to create some space on the legislative calendar in order to move things through. I've already highlighted Bill 152, and I know that when you're talking to people in my riding, they want to see a number of the provisions of that bill brought through.

One of the provisions that's a particular interest of mine is the banning of advertising of online gaming sites. It's interesting; that's an issue that has had a lot of play in the media of late. The government of Great Britain is in the process of organizing a seven-country summit to deal with that particular issue. The United States Senate and Congress have been dealing with that bill, and indeed we are prepared to take some action here in the province of Ontario so that we continue to support the horse-racing industry in Ontario. That has been, to date, one of the healthier parts of the agricultural economy in the province of Ontario. Indeed, the other side of that coin is the issue of problem gamblers. When I've chatted with a number of people in social service divisions and departments across the province of Ontario, they're seeing an increase in people who are coming into their departments with regard to online gaming. So I'm pleased that Minister Phillips picked up what essentially was my private member's bill, Bill 60, to incorporate that into his omnibus bill dealing with strengthening a number of consumer protection acts in the province of Ontario.

There are also some changes that will come into place with the provincial land tax to bring about additional fairness whereby similar properties in certain sections in the province will now pay similar taxes.

The other thing, hopefully, during the review of assessments in Ontario is the issue of trailer parks. I've long been an advocate that perhaps we should move to a sticker system for trailers in Ontario. Indeed, when you chat with municipalities in the province where they have

trailer parks and want to make sure, just on a seasonal basis—many of them would like to go to a sticker system whereby the respective municipality would issue a licensing sticker, similar to what we have on our licence plates today, and attach that to the trailer, with the municipality establishing a value to cover the limited police service, ambulance service and garbage pickup that they would provide to that park. So I do think that is a real opportunity to make some progress in that area.

I'd be remiss if I didn't congratulate my good friend Paul Ayotte, who won in a landslide victory last night in Peterborough to become the new mayor. I had the opportunity to serve with Mr. Ayotte on council and I know that he will do a very good job as he assumes the role of mayor of Peterborough in early December, taking over from Her Worship, outgoing Mayor Sylvia Sutherland, who has the distinction of being the longest-serving mayor in the history of the city of Peterborough: some 15 years. She decided to retire and not seek re-election and to go back to one of her great loves in life, which was writing.

It's interesting that Mayor Sutherland started her journalistic career right here in Toronto at the Toronto Telegram, covering city council. She used to share with me the late Margaret Campbell, who was on council at that time. Margaret Campbell was noted always to provide a very good quote that a journalist could provide in a daily newspaper. Sylvia did cover Toronto city council for the Telegram until the Telegram's demise. So we're looking forward—perhaps Ms. Sutherland will go back to being a journalist in the Peterborough area. I know she likes to write travelogues. She will be sorely missed, as she provided dynamic and outstanding leadership when the flood hit Peterborough on July 15, 2004.

I know that my time is winding down and some other people will share with us, but there are a number of schedules in this act: schedule E, which is the capital investment plan, which has impact through the Public Hospitals Act, municipalities and universities. Schedule F deals with community small business investment funds.

So when you take the time to go through Bill 151—it's An Act to enact various 2006 Budget measures and to enact, amend or repeal various Acts—it certainly will have an impact on many of the things we do in Ontario. But I would also be remiss if I didn't have the opportunity to chat about the education system. My wife, Karan, is a teacher of some 20 years, so I do spend fair amount of time with those in the teaching profession. It's interesting, the new spirit of optimism that you can see in the classroom today, and having had the opportunity during Remembrance Week last week to be in several schools, to be there shoulder to shoulder with veterans from the Second World War and from the Korean War and peace-keeping missions, and an individual who actually just came back from our mission in Afghanistan. I want to get on the record that we need to support those young men and women unconditionally as they go about their task in a very, very serious situation, a very

challenging situation, and one that's fraught with many dangers.

I had the opportunity to be in schools and chat with teachers, chat with students and chat with parents about the optimism and the positive feeling that is in the classroom today. There has been peace and stability for the last three years and it has brought about a very conducive learning environment. This is talking not necessarily to the union officials within the teachers' union, but these are the rank-and-file teachers who go about in a quiet, professional way and who, in very diligent manner, day in and day out, provide the very best education to our young men and women in the province of Ontario. It goes without saying that, outside of one's parents or other family members, we probably spend more time with teachers than with any other individual. I always like to say, when I have the opportunity to be in a classroom, that teachers do provide a compass for individuals for their lives, and whether they're difficult or good times, that compass is always available, and I take time to thank our teachers.

Another group of individuals certainly brought home during Remembrance Day are those men and women who are in uniform, whether it's police officers or firefighters or people who serve with us in emergency measures service. We often just take those individuals for granted, so I always like to stress that we should take the opportunity, when we have a moment, to go up and shake their hands and just thank them for the job well done that they do for each of us each and every day. We had the opportunity to meet with the Ontario Police Association today. I talked to Dave McFadden and Ted Boynton, who represent the Peterborough-Lakefield police service, both of them with more than 25 years of dedicated devotion to the police service in our community. I had an opportunity to chat with them about their concerns and what support they need, not only from the municipal level government but from the province. Tomorrow, I understand that firefighters will be here at Queen's Park again to share with us their concerns and just to highlight again the very demanding jobs that they have and how they work for us each and every day.

Bill 151, we'll deal through a time allocation. Many of the measures in this bill are indeed needed, and I ask our folks in the Legislature to move ahead with this time allocation to move this through so we will have the opportunity to get on with other bills in this House that the good citizens of Ontario are expecting us to pass.

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Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I appreciate the opportunity to address this time allocation motion. I think it's very important to have a fulsome debate, a proper debate, on budget measures legislation such as we find in Bill 151.

I also have been reading Hansard, a document I take very seriously, and I've come across a number of quotations as well. We heard some references. The member for Parkdale-High Park made reference to words that were spoken a number of years ago. Looking back to pre-2003,

it's very clear that this government will say just about anything it needs to to try to get elected.

I have a quote as well. "I have to say how disappointed I am again to have to speak to yet another one of the many closure motions that have been brought by this government." I'm referring here to the words of Minister Dombrowsky. This was December 5, 2001. I will say that at that time that particular minister was a committed anti-time-allocation crusader.

We need only look further at words that were spoken. October 21, 2002—

Interjection.

Mr. Barrett: We've got a bit of interest across the way now.

"Here we go again. Sadly, again, we're here debating a time allocation motion."

I have another quote. October 15, 2002: "I'm very disappointed, again, in my role as the elected voice of the people from my riding to have to speak to a time allocation motion."

June 10, 2002: "I have to say that it is with regret that I have to stand in my place again today to speak to yet another time allocation motion."

On October 31, 2000—that would be Halloween—"Sadly, again I stand to speak to a time allocation motion."

It's obvious that we really can't take much credence from anything that particular cabinet minister—in this case, the Minister of Agriculture—had to say with respect to opposition to the time allocation process, a process that we are now debating this evening, a process brought forward by the government opposite.

When any group of people—in this case, the McGuinty government—are caught, over and over again, changing their minds, making stuff up or generally saying things they know they don't believe in, we have to ask: Why would any group of people do that? Are there any root causes? In this circumstance, and from my reading on this, the inherent refusal to essentially tell it like it is—I use the term "promise breakers." I suppose you could look at the thesaurus. I think of bamboozlers or fact distorters. We all know that, in many cases, this particular Liberal government is far beyond any of those characterizations.

We have seen how Minister Dombrowsky quickly changed her tune about time allocation motions once she gained power, and there's evidence of that here this evening. Also, farmers across the province of Ontario have come to realize how this government has changed its mind with respect to the importance of the business of farming in this great province.

We all recall the particular plank in the Liberal platform. I'll quote again. "We will make the Ministry of Agriculture a lead ministry." And to fulfill that promise requires budgeting. We're debating a budget motion this evening. I would put forward that many farmers are furious to know that they've been had by this government, and this budget bill, Bill 151, from my reading, really does nothing to address that.

We did hear this evening that through this measure, they will be putting a tax on ethanol. I'm not sure how that is meant to encourage the use of an alternate fuel like ethanol in the province of Ontario. Last October—this would be a year ago October—Minister Dombrowsky admitted that “CAIS has not worked well for grains and oilseeds.” Since then, we have seen essentially no commitment to fix that particular problem. It's deferred to the federal government. We have seen a volley of insults lobbed towards Ottawa. I guess we were not surprised to see what happened when Minister Ramsay, minister of aboriginal affairs, flew to Ottawa several weeks ago, sat in Jim Prentice's office, never did have a meeting, got on the plane and came back home. This is what happens when that kind of a relationship deteriorates between the federal and provincial levels.

When I make reference to CAIS, it's very important to distinguish, for budgeting reasons obviously, between agricultural support and agricultural stabilization. The United States does have agricultural support. They support agriculture as a strategic sector of the economy. In Canada, we have stabilization. We keep farm income stable. Sadly, at the present time, they are essentially stabilizing at a very low level. There's a little bit of light at the end of the tunnel with respect to soybean and corn prices, but essentially we have gone through a very dismal three-year period in the province as far as farm income.

Contrast that to the United States. The last three years have been the three best years, the three most profitable years for farm income in the United States. At the same time, we in Ontario are pretty well at the breaking point, and what do we see? We see further delay, we see no evidence of any reaching out to the federal government, and it's reflected well by signs that I have seen at farm rallies. I recall these signs in Ottawa, in London, farm rallies here in Toronto and Guelph. One sign comes to mind, directed towards this present government with respect to their lack of policy concerning farmers. The signs would read, “Study, stall, and study.”

Two weeks ago, I rose in this Legislature to ask the Minister of Agriculture what she intended to do to transform the CAIS program. I asked if there had been an analysis—this was an analysis requested by farmers—to determine whether farmers are better or worse off now compared to what I consider the benefits of the old NISA program. What I received that day essentially was a vitriolic tirade. Farmers do not want false rage from their Minister of Agriculture; they want support. They need support. They need something beyond stabilization of three dismal years in the industry. From my reading of this particular budget bill, there's nothing in there for farmers. The only item I see that relates to agriculture is jacking up taxes on ethanol.

Farmers are very disturbed with the process. The CAIS application forms are complex, very difficult for a farm couple to complete, let alone—very difficult for their chartered accountant to complete.

Again, we have a Minister of Agriculture who continues to refuse to even examine how farmers would fare under the old system. As far as the new system, there has been no indication, no reaching out at all to the federal government to try, in the minister's words, to transform the CAIS program.

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Mr. Kormos: I've listened oh, so carefully to the government apologists for this guillotine motion, this closure motion. What they fail to mention is that the closure motion doesn't just end debate now on second reading—take a look at the motion; it limits public hearings to but one day. Think about it. Ms. DiNovo already said, “This is democratic reform?” “This is inclusive politics?” she queried sarcastically. One day of public hearings, and that day includes clause-by-clause consideration. That is an affront to every resident of this province.

It's one thing for this government to treat opposition members—heck, not just opposition members but its own backbenchers; why, not just its own backbenchers but most of its own front bench—with disdain and disregard, but now it's snubbing, thumbing its nose, giving the proverbial finger to every single Ontarian in this province. While, on the one hand, some of the government-paid apologists say, “Oh, the bill means nothing. The bill's irrelevant. It's just something to allow us to move forward,” you've got others who say, “But the bill is substantive. It does all these things: (a), (b), (c), (d), and (e).”

In a democracy, in the kind of democracy that most Ontarians believe in, the public has a right to participate in the democratic process. That's what public hearings are all about, Mr. Runciman. It's one thing to say, “The government is tired of the inevitable criticism it receives during the course of second reading debate.” I understand that. It's another thing entirely for this government to say that it's tired of the people of Ontario and doesn't want to hear from them either, because that's what this time allocation motion does.

I tell you, even further, on third reading, debate will be but a few hours over the course of but one sessional day. See, that's why time allocation motions, these jackboot tactics, are so reprehensible, so offensive. That's why. There's a parliamentary process. Good grief; every member of this chamber joined veterans at cenotaphs around Ontario this past week, not only during the week and the weekend prior but certainly on November 11, and we made note of the fact, as we stood shoulder to shoulder, as it was down in Port Colborne on Saturday morning, in a cold, drizzling rain, with vets now in their 80s, stooped, grey, but still standing firm—every one of us reflected that not only did these men and women fight for the right for people in Europe and Asia to elect governments democratically and to have a democratic process, but young Canadians in some of the most dangerous places in the world right now are fighting to do the same. And how does this government mark Remembrance Day? With a time allocation motion.

I say, fine; if the government wants to end second reading debate, although there are precious few members of the chamber who have had an opportunity to participate in that debate on what is a substantial bill with a whole lot of provisions, I tell you, that should cause a great deal of concern, and provisions, I tell you, that New Democrats have no interest in being associated with—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean—Carleton): I agree.

Mr. Kormos: The member says. And now to exclude the public from that most noteworthy of democratic processes, public hearing participation, to deny them that opportunity—you see, that's why, in November 2001, Mr. Caplan, now the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, said here in the chamber, "I usually start off my remarks by saying it's a pleasure to speak to something on behalf of the people of Don Valley East, but it really isn't. This is yet another closure motion, a gag order on the Legislature. How could it ever be a pleasure to speak to that when that's the normal course of action and when this Legislature is shut down for the very purpose it was meant for, which was to discuss important matters?" Those are not my words; they're Mr. Caplan's words.

One Mr. Sorbara, the real Premier, now Minister of Finance—

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds—Grenville): He showed up occasionally in opposition.

Mr. Kormos: He showed up often enough to pull the strings and make the marionettes dance.

December 2001, Mr. Sorbara: "I stand here today to condemn this time allocation motion and to say to you that—let me put it this way—governments are defeated for two reasons: one, because of what they do, because of the policies they bring forward and the things they do to the people of a place like Ontario, and the second reason they are defeated is the way in which they go about doing them.... This time allocation motion is just another example of why people are so anxious to get to the ballot box in a general election and send them packing."

Later on, in the same comments, he says: "That's why this time allocation motion is such a tragedy. I surely will be voting against it."

The government House Leader was as articulate and eloquent and passionate an opponent of time allocation motions as one could find until he found the back seat of that luxurious state limo.

December 11, 2001, Mr. Bradley, whom I have the greatest regard for—I consider him a very good friend: "How I wish we didn't have to debate this time allocation motion.... I simply want to say that once again we see the government using its iron fist on the opposition."

November 28, 2001: "Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity, unfortunately, to speak on yet another time allocation motion. That is a motion, of course, where debate is choked off in the Legislative Assembly by the dictum of the government."

December 3, 2001, Mr. Bradley, now Minister of Tourism: "I too will be opposing the time allocation motion.... But I think more and more people should realize that this Legislature has become largely irrelevant

in the democratic process in Ontario." You see, that's what time allocation motions do. That's what closure motions do. That's what guillotine motions do. They make the Legislature irrelevant. And they not only make the Legislature irrelevant; they make the public irrelevant.

One Mr. John Gerretsen, now the Minister of Municipal Affairs, June 11, 2003, speaking about a time allocation motion, said: "It is shutting off debate. We've got many, many members on this side of the House who want the opportunity to speak on this bill, and that's being denied."

November 19, 2002, Mr. Gerretsen: "Closure is not the way a democratically elected Parliament should operate." Mr. Gerretsen was protesting on behalf of the people of Ontario. Where is Mr. Gerretsen's voice now? I hear nothing.

Ah, a senior member of the government caucus, Mr. Levac, now; as he was then, the member for Brant, November 25, 2002: "First, in a nutshell," Mr. Levac says, "time allocation itself, the reality of what time allocation means: basically, the stopping of debate.... it's a new device with which this government has been stifling democracy." "Stifling democracy," Mr. Levac says in 2002 about time allocation. The silence today is deafening.

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November 25, 2002, same comments somewhat later, Mr. Levac: "Stop the closure stuff." Mr. Levac was a vocal, passionate advocate for democratic process in 2002: "Stop the closure stuff."

December 11, 2000—

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke): Not Levac again.

Mr. Kormos: —Mr. Levac: "I rise with some consternation as to whether or not speaking to this bill will have an impact on the government's decision to use time allocation, so what I want to do first is explain very clearly to the people that time allocation is a tactic used by governments that simply want to remove the opportunity for too much debate ... they're fearful of what might be said, or they need to better manage their time in terms of how the legislative agenda and calendar has come apart.... the fact is the government shows it's doing one of two things. It's either not listening to the people out there ... or this government's agenda is falling apart." Mr. Levac on time allocation, 2001, 2002.

I was intrigued earlier in the course of this debate with the obsession that the member for Peterborough has with Liberal leadership candidate Bob Rae. I want to make it very clear that, should Mr. Rae become the leader of the Liberal Party, I have every intention of spending a great deal of time across the province in the course of the next federal election, telling Ontarians about social contract; telling Ontarians about defunding pension plans, another brilliant Bob Rae strategy; telling Ontarians about casino gaming, another brilliant Bob Rae strategy; telling Ontarians about the promise to install public auto insurance—Mr. Bob Rae, a political leader who would do or say anything he had to to get elected. Why, truly, he established

his credentials as a Liberal a long time ago, didn't he, Speaker?

I want to tell you, the member from Peterborough caused me to reflect on what the definition might be of someone who deserts a party or a cause. I found it very interesting that someone who might desert a party or a cause is, in the Canadian Oxford English dictionary, called a rat; how interesting. Indeed, it was Winston Churchill who said, when he ratted twice—he left the Conservatives to sit with the Liberals and then he left the Liberals to sit with the Conservatives—“Anyone can rat, but it takes a certain amount of ingenuity to re-rat.” So let's understand that a rat is a rat.

Interjections.

Mr. Kormos: Well, look, here's the definition. Here's the dictionary. It's the Canadian Oxford English. It defines a rat as someone who deserts a party or cause. I just protected Mr. Yakabuski to a great extent, to the point where he'll be allowed to maintain his singing career. I expect him to express gratitude.

Did I mention to you that New Democrats aren't going to support this time allocation motion?

Mr. Runciman: Yes, once or twice.

Mr. Kormos: Did I mention to you that it's shameful, shameful, shameful that the public is going to be denied the opportunity to participate in any meaningful public hearing around this bill, a bill about which—

Interjections.

Mr. Kormos: Mr. Yakabuski and Mr. Sorbara exchange here in the Legislature.

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): You're supposed to use riding names.

Mr. Kormos: Mr. Sorbara interjects, and he's quite right. The Minister of Finance is here tonight, I trust using the balance of his time to explain to the people of Ontario why they won't be allowed meaningful participation in public hearings. Because, you see, Mr. Sorbara, the Minister of Finance, may want to explain in the time that's going to be available to him why, on December 3, 2001, he said, “That's why this time allocation motion is such a tragedy. I certainly will be voting against it.”

On that same day—and perhaps the Minister of Finance, later this evening, before we reach the hour of 9:20, will explain why in December 2001 he said, “I stand here today to condemn this time allocation motion and to say to you that—let me put it this way—governments are defeated for two reasons: one, because of what they do, because of the policies they bring forward and the things they do to the people of a place like Ontario, and the second reason they are defeated is the way in which they go about doing them.... This time allocation motion is just another example of why people are so anxious to get to the ballot box in a general election and send them packing.”

So the Minister of Finance, in 2001, condemns time allocation motions. And I wonder what he has to say about this time allocation motion. Let's be very, very

clear, and perhaps I wasn't sufficiently clear when I first spoke to the matter when I became distracted by rats.

Interjection.

Mr. Kormos: Mr. Yakabuski interjects.

Let's understand that this time allocation motion could have merely terminated debate at second reading stage. It didn't have to effectively deny public hearings. It didn't have to, as it does, restrict third reading debate to what will amount to a mere handful of hours—two or three at best.

Mr. Yakabuski: No meaningful debate on third reading.

Mr. Kormos: More importantly, there's no public participation in committee. For three years, members of the opposition and these poor backbenchers in the rump have lived with and tolerated the disdain that the government, the little inner circle, the Premier and his éminence grise, have displayed towards them. I understand their frustration, but there's a time when backbenchers are given an opportunity to stand up and confront those same people who promised them the world—I'm talking about their Premier's office staff, the minions behind the Speaker—but who leave them to, with great frustration, while away time in the rump.

The government can't have it both ways. The member for Mississauga West said that this bill was nothing, really. That was the essence of his comments. “It's just a get-on-with-it bill. The bill means nothing, really. There is nothing substantive in there.” Then the member for Peterborough says: “Oh, no. This bill is a bill of substance and body and is going to have significant impact.” I say, then, if that's the case, why is the public going to be allowed two hours to participate in public hearings?

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I understand that the nice thing about being a Liberal is you don't always have to be a Liberal. You can campaign like a New Democrat and govern like a Tory; Canadians have learned that over and over again.

The difficulty that New Democrats and fair-minded people have with this time allocation motion is that it indeed says to the public, this government says to the public, Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals say to the public, “Go pound salt. We have no interest whatsoever in your views on the content of this budget bill, this finance bill.” That's what the government is saying. The government is saying to the people of Ontario, “Go away. Go. Don't bother us. We're here to govern, and we don't need you until we come looking for your votes once again in yet another year's time.” That's McGuinty and the Liberals in a pre-election mode, saying to the public, “Go away. Don't even think of being consulted or participating in a committee process.”

I happen to believe—New Democrats happen to believe; Ms. DiNovo happens to believe—that what happens in this chamber should be of the utmost importance; that for people to say, “Oh, it has been debated enough,” is hardly an argument when the vast majority of members of this place haven't had a chance to speak to the bill yet.

I was fortunate enough to be elected here at a time when there weren't limits on speeches and when time allocation wasn't possible, pursuant to the standing orders. Rather, the government relied upon the common-law rule of closure and prevailed upon the Speaker to invoke closure, and the Speaker would do that only after there had been, in his or her view, substantial debate, inclusive debate, or when, in his or her view, the debate was becoming merely dilatory. At that time, we had a House that didn't sit evenings, denying opposition parties a question period—because that's what sitting evenings is all about, denying opposition parties a question period while seizing a sessional day by the government; that's why they do it—and I say to you, more legislation got passed than has since. It's true.

It's remarkable that the government just doesn't get it, just doesn't understand.

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): We get it.

Mr. Kormos: Oh, you'll get it; I'm sure of that. You'll get everything you deserve.

I say that when government shows such disdain for debate, it's a government that should cause people great concern; it's a government about which people should be asking some pretty serious questions; it's a government that people should start to fear rather than respect.

I remember the first few days of this government. I remember newly elected government members, and I could actually hear them saying, "Oh, my goodness, what are we doing this for? Why don't we just get down to business?" The couple I heard saying that were talking about the debate taking place. They just didn't understand why there would be a debate here in the Legislature, here in the Parliament. A debate? My goodness, how shocking.

I say that the process is very important for a whole pile of reasons. One, it's the job of the opposition to critique government legislation and policy, to expose flaws in government legislation and policy, to question it, to reveal its true content and to take a clear position. Surely it's the responsibility of government members to stand up and let their constituents know why they're supporting a particular bill, as they inevitably do. Otherwise, people are mere voting machines, people are but trained seals—or untrained seals, as the case may be. The government whip is probably in a better position to comment on that.

I find time allocation motions disturbing. I find this one particularly repugnant because it doesn't just shut down the opposition; it shuts down the public.

We're going to vote on this in about 30 minutes' time. So I'm saying this to government members: Today you have handed to you an opportunity to do the right thing; today you have handed to you an opportunity to make it clear to your Premier's Office, to the whip's office, that you're beholden not to the Premier or the whip but to the people who sent you here. I say to government members that today is the opportunity for you to stand up and do the right thing. When opposition members, when Ms. DiNovo and I, joined by our Conservative colleagues,

stand up and oppose this bill, I'm pleading with even just seven government members to stand up in opposition to the resolution as well and to make a difference, to leave a mark, to demonstrate the courage—

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): Free vote.

Mr. Kormos: Mr. Levac says—the same sort of free vote that has been promised by his Premier and leader. Oh, please. We need the Premier to come in here and say that. We need the members of this chamber to show the courage to do it. Actions will speak far louder than words.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Levac: I appreciate the opportunity. Well, the member from Niagara Centre has done it again, the effervescent, bombastic, passionate, dramatic speaker that he is, and he does a good job all the time. But look at the positioning of their idea of what time allocation means in this case. So let's set up the context. I didn't mind being quoted, because those quotes from Hansard are very usable, and I'd like them to be used again, with the context. Let's set the context, in case anyone wants to use them. Both members of the NDP used them. Let's set up the context to see if they accept it and understand—or were they just being selective in their research?

From 1999 to 2003, the Harris-Eves government used time allocation for 67 of the 111 government bills that received royal assent, or 61% of the bills were time-allocated. The Eves government, in its last session, used time allocation 83% of the time on their bills. For 83% of their bills, they used time allocation. Talk about frustration. In eight years, the Tories never had more than three days of second reading debate on a budget bill—never. During the eight years of PC rule, the average third reading debate on a government bill was—get this—less than one sessional day. That was the context of the frustration that both the NDP and the Liberals faced in dealing with the time allocation boogeyman that's being referenced. This government has used it—are you ready?—7% of the time on the bills that are being talked about.

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My goodness gracious. Where is the drama? Where's the bombastic attitude about it? There's the context. Go ahead and keep quoting us about what we went through. You weren't here. But if you had seen what happened—wait a minute; I missed something. Let's talk about the NDP's record on the very thing the member opposite was blowing up about. Let's go. The NDP set a trend for the use of time allocation motions. They used time allocation five times more than the previous Liberal government did under Premier Peterson—five times more. "Oh, but that didn't count. That was yesterday. That doesn't count. Don't look at our record; just look at the one today." And guess what? The member from Niagara Centre is worrying about public hearings. There were no public hearings when the NDP ripped up the collective agreements for the social contract, no time allocated to third reading debate. Bingo, gone. Oh, so the holier-than-thou NDP stands up and says, "A pox on all your houses." Last, but not least, there were no public hearings when the NDP

raised the gas tax 3.4 cents a litre. Not one word from the public was allowed.

My goodness gracious, that's the context. So both the opposition parties can stand up and scream bloody murder all they want; the record speaks for itself.

Mr. Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to join the raucous debate on Bill 151, the Budget Measures Act. I just listened to the member for Brant talk about what he sees as an inconsistency in the other parties for criticizing this government for bringing in time allocation motions. What he fails to point out is that this party here didn't make promises with regard to time allocation, didn't criticize time allocation when in opposition, because they were in government. You see, these guys made a career of screaming and yelling about the use and the implementation of time allocation when the Conservatives were in government. You see, there's the inconsistency. I've never had the opportunity, as a member of government, to invoke time allocation.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: And you never will.

Mr. Yakabuski: I've never had the opportunity, and the Minister of Finance says I never will. What he probably means is that when I am in government I never will. I presume that's what he's meaning. But he's a man who's full of dichotomies and hidden meanings. You know that "mystery wrapped up in an enigma" kind of thing? He's one of those kind of fellows. A charming lad, though, I must say. He may be implying that we're never going to be in government. I don't know about that. I'd be willing to take that bet at some point.

But there's the inconsistency. When you stand on principle, on the opposition side, and rail—and I must say that the number of passages from the gospel according to Liberal opposition members that my friend from Niagara Centre quoted gives me reason to pause and reflect: Do these guys believe a word they say themselves? A single word? Or do they just stand there and make a lot of noise? Do they jump up in righteous indignation when they want to gain some kind of a political advantage and claim that the democratic process is at risk? Because if you're going to stand on principle, then you've got to stand for principles. And when the shoe is on the other foot, you can't throw those principles out the window because now it becomes convenient. The member for Brant must know that. He must know that you just can't toss those principles away because your needs of that particular day mean that you want to be expedient and you want to move on quickly. That's not good enough. That is the concern that New Democrats have articulated and that is the concern that we're articulating as members of Her Majesty's opposition.

Mr. Leal: Loyal opposition.

Mr. Yakabuski: Loyal opposition; thank you very much. The member for Peterborough points out that we are Her Majesty's loyal opposition. "Loyal she began, loyal remains," as the slogan on our coat of arms indicates.

Mr. Leal: You're right, sir.

Mr. Yakabuski: Mr. Speaker, I know they try to throw me off when I'm on to something good, but it just won't work.

What I'm very concerned about is the inconsistency on the part of Liberals. Concerned? I'm very concerned. Surprised? Not a bit. I'm not a bit surprised that the Liberals would say one thing while in opposition, scream to the high heavens about the wrongness of what the government was doing, and when in government do precisely what they condemned while in opposition. Am I surprised by those actions? As I say, and as I will repeat, not a bit; not a bit. So there is the concern that the people of Ontario should have: why this government has such a different view of things now that they're no longer the opposition.

I want to read some of these wonderful quotes. I see the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal here, and I want to read what he had to say. I'm sure he has had some busy days. He's been before the estimates committee, so he's had a heavy schedule these last couple of days. However, I do want to read what he had to say about time allocation, because I'm sure he's here tonight to ensure that this time allocation motion passes. I suppose he's going to be voting for this motion. I want to hear what he had to say about time allocation motions. Hmm. This is Mr. Caplan, now the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal:

"I usually start off my remarks by saying it's a pleasure to speak to something on behalf of the people of Don Valley East, but it really isn't. This is yet another closure motion, a gag order on the Legislature. How could it ever be a pleasure to speak to that, when that's the normal course of action and when this Legislature is shut down for the very purpose it was meant for, which was to discuss important matters? That's what happening here today: people who are going to be watching this on television will see a banner on their screen which says a motion for time allocation—it's closure, plain and simple."

Well, the curtain falls. The curtain falls on democracy, according to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, here in the 38th Parliament. The curtain falls.

I want to just slide a little off, do a lateral motion here for the time being. I want to talk a little bit about constituency week, the week that we just had. I've got to tell you what a great week it was, because constituency week, as you know, coincides with remembrance week. In my riding of 17 municipalities, you can well appreciate how many different communities have their own commemorative ceremonies to honour those who made the ultimate sacrifice for peace, democracy and freedom around the world and here in Canada.

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I had the honour of attending many of these this year. Of course, you can't attend them all, because there just aren't enough days and enough time in those days to get to them all every year. But one thing I've been able to see over the past four years now that I have attended these ceremonies is the poignant, meaningful ceremonies that

are unique to each and every community. I'm sure it is no different for any member of this Legislature. Some have more communities and more celebrations than others, but at every one of these stops you can see the unique sacrifice of each community and the stories of sacrifice that each community has to tell across Ontario and, of course, across Canada. I think that we are privileged as legislators to be able to go to these communities and share some of those stories with them.

The theme this year from Veterans Affairs was "Share the Story." I think it was such an appropriate theme because, as the numbers of our veterans dwindle and become fewer and fewer every year, it's very, very important that those people do share those stories so that they will not be lost generations from now. I know that many veterans find those stories painful to talk about. I know that my own father was very uncomfortable talking about experiences overseas. Perhaps if he had lived longer, he may have reached a point where he would have been more comfortable talking about them to his children and other people—talking to people other than old war buddies. This year's theme, "Share the Story," is something that I hope our great veterans latch on to and support so that those stories of Canada's contribution—tremendous contribution—in times of war will not be forgotten.

I think sometimes we tend to minimize our contributions because we tend to not want to talk about those kinds of things. But the truth is that Canada made a tremendous contribution in conflicts around the world and it's something we should be very proud of, because all of the things we enjoy today, all of the freedoms, all of the privileges, are attributed to those who made those ultimate sacrifices, those who came back to help build a country, and of course those brave men and women who are defending those ideals today in places around the world, particularly in Afghanistan. So I wanted to take that moment to share that with you. As I say, I think we are privileged to be able to participate in those ceremonies, and I want to say thank you to all of those who have contributed to our freedom around the world.

Now, back to the motion, this time allocation motion. The finance minister himself, who, I would suggest, has been—while he may not be the one who tabled this motion, because the House leader would have tabled it, I guess.

Interjection.

Mr. Yakabuski: The deputy House leader tabled it? Yes, the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal is not only the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal; he's the deputy House leader. He's the guy behind it.

Ms. MacLeod: He's behind everything.

Mr. Yakabuski: He's behind it. But don't think for a minute that he and the finance minister haven't communicated about this, because the finance minister doesn't want us talking about the budget measures of this government. The finance minister doesn't want us standing up here and pointing out the inadequacies, the failures, the shenanigans of this government when it

comes to budgets. He doesn't want us talking about that. He doesn't want us talking about things like how a government, in three years, has had spending go up almost \$20 billion, from \$68 billion to \$88 billion. He doesn't want us to talk about that because the people in this province know that that money is only coming from one source: right out of their pockets. That's where it's coming from.

He doesn't want us talking about that, and he doesn't want us talking about the fact that—you know me; I'm an optimist. But there is some concern out there about the prospects for Ontario's economy. He doesn't want us talking about that. He doesn't want us talking about the fact that there are some worried people out there with regard to the prospects on the horizon. They want to talk about 250,000 or 240,000 jobs in the first three years of Liberal rule. Well, I can tell you, in the first three years of the previous government's rule they created 370,000 jobs, and that was their worst three years. In the last three years they created over half a million jobs, and those weren't dominated by public sector jobs, like half of these jobs are—"created by this government." That's what they like to say: "created."

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: Never said it once.

Mr. Yakabuski: The Minister of Finance never said it once. Okay. What word does he use? I don't know, but they like to take credit for it.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: We say that the people created those jobs.

Mr. Yakabuski: Okay. I want to hear that in your next Hansard.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: I want you to say it right now. Repeat after me: The people created those jobs.

Mr. Yakabuski: Then you'd better stop trying to take credit for them.

They don't want us talking about the reality of how this government is taking over \$2,000 more out of an average family's pocket than when they were elected.

You know, I'll never forget the gentleman—I was in a Tim Hortons and he said to me, "John, what are you going to do about that McGuinty?" I said, "Well, I'm going to do my best to hope that we can replace them as government." He said, "John, by the time the election rolls around, the only thing that's going to be left in my pockets is lint." That's what he said to me: lint. "That's what's going to be left in my pockets," he told me, "from this government."

So they don't want us talking about those kinds of things because they want the people of Ontario to think that—you know what?—everything is hunky-dory at Queen's Park. Mr. McGuinty's got everything under control. He's got Greg Sorbara, the finance minister. The guy knows everything.

Mr. Leal: He's doing a great job.

Mr. Yakabuski: Well, that's not the fact. We're looking for an opportunity to debate these kinds of bills and to debate these kinds of measures so that the right information can be disseminated to the people of Ontario so they can make real, informed decisions and so they

can analyze this and say, "Are we on the right track?" You know, this government would like to say it's on the right track. Well, the track that this government is on—I think, not too far ahead, we'll see that somebody has forgotten to put down the rails, because this train, this Liberal train, this economic mess that this finance minister is in charge of is about to be derailed. That's why we need real—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much. Further debate?

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Hon. Mr. Sorbara: I don't get as many opportunities as I would like to participate in these evening sittings. In fact, I'm here on a Tuesday night, and I think the Legislature has got real problems. I've heard two comedians address the very important issue of this budget bill, both of them entertaining within a context. My friend the member from Niagara Centre has been doing that routine for a very long time.

Mr. Leal: Jackie Gleason and Johnny Carson.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: Well, not that good, I say to my friend from Peterborough. I grew up with Jackie Gleason. Jackie Gleason was a really great comedian, and Johnny Carson was one of the great late-night entertainers.

My friend from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke went on a tirade. It was full of—what did Shakespeare say?—sound and fury, signifying nothing. We all know about that, and that's what we heard from both of them.

I have an opportunity to wrap up this debate on the time allocation motion, and I do it with some pride and some joy. I want to spend a minute responding to my friend from Niagara Centre about time allocation, because he checked Hansard and quoted me on time allocation from back in December 2001. I stand by the remarks that I made at that time. In fact, I have the great honour of being one of the last people to filibuster this Legislature, in 1993, I think it was. My friend from Niagara Centre was here, and the New Democratic Party, under then-House leader Dave Cooke, made the most tremendous transformation of the rules that this Parliament has ever seen, basically unilaterally killing most members' opportunity to actually—

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: My friend Mr. Kormos says, "Do you remember Bob Rae signing off on that?" I remember coming across the floor to speak to the Premier. At that time, Mr. Rae—I'm not going to get into that part of my speech; I'll save it for another time—was sitting in this desk right here. I said to him, "Bob, these are draconian changes. You're cutting off Parliament's ability to debate and discuss and consider legislation. I know you're doing it for a good purpose today, but one day you will not be in government. One day perhaps the Conservatives will be in government, and they will abuse those rules," which they did from 1995 to when we finally threw them out of office in October 2003. So I stand by my own record on time allocation.

This motion is really quite simple. This motion says, "Let's get this bill from this Parliament into the standing

committee on finance and economic affairs. Let's give the public and the members an opportunity to consider the various issues in this bill." What does this bill do? This bill is quite simple. It's the second bill to enact the measures that were contained in the budget that my colleague, now the Minister of Energy, presented in March. It was a darned good budget; in fact, historically the most significant investment in infrastructure this province has seen in perhaps 50 years. We're investing significantly, for the first time in decades, in public transportation right across the GTA.

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): And \$32 million for Ottawa.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: My friend Mr. McNeely says, "\$32 million for Ottawa." All across the province we see roads being built, bridges being built, and new transit systems being put in place because of that budget. This time allocation motion simply says, "Let's put the final touches on the budget measures, let's get them implemented and let's get them in place."

Surprisingly, we heard today in question period the new member from Nepean–Carleton complaining about the fact, and suggesting erroneously, I say to my friend from Renfrew, that somehow this government was abandoning its commitment to the O-Train in Ottawa. This is fantastic. She succeeds the now federal President of the Treasury Board, the incredible John Baird, who has been trying to sabotage the O-Train, derail the O-Train, ever since he got elected and became part of Mr. Harper's cabinet. The uproar in this Parliament at that question has rarely been matched in question periods over the course of the last season, or perhaps years.

The budget commits further funds to the O-Train, to Ottawa, and it commits to bridges in your riding and in your riding and in your riding. It sets aside almost \$750 million to get new transit systems in the greater Toronto area under way. Once our friends in the federal government decide to put their name and their signature on the cheque, we'll be able to get construction of that subway going. Surely to God, it is in the interest of everyone in this Legislature and, I say to them in Ottawa, in that Legislature, that we get on with these projects. That's what the budget is really all about.

In the closing minutes, there are just a couple of other things that perhaps have not had a lot of ink or powerful spotlights on them. This budget bill, which as a result of this motion will move through the process into committee, will enhance property and sales tax credits for seniors—a very important measure. All of us know, in every one of our ridings, that the situation of seniors on low or fixed incomes is an issue all of us have to take seriously. This budget bill helps seniors out with a further enhancement to the property and sales tax credit. I know that members, when they're considering it, will want this measure to get passed, and get passed quickly, on behalf of those seniors. Finally, you'll recall that the first budget of my counterpart, Mr. Flaherty, in Ottawa provided for a universal child care benefit. This budget bill makes sure

that moms and dads with young children get the full financial benefit of that tax credit.

Surely that's a worthy purpose. Surely it's important to get these measures moved forward. Surely it's important to use some discipline with our time, and this time allocation motion simply says, "Let us now wrap up debate in this Legislature, allow our committee to consider the details, and get the bill back here for third reading and passage into law." If we can wrap that up, we will be benefiting every single mom and dad with young kids in Ontario and thousands and thousands of seniors who look to this enhanced benefit as part of the package that they saw in that budget.

With that, I am pleased to wrap up the debate.

Mr. Yakabuski: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would ask unanimous consent that the Minister of Finance get some extra time. We hardly heard a word about Bob Rae; we thought he was going to talk a little more about Bob Rae.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I heard a no.

Mr. Caplan has moved government notice of motion 237. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2119 to 2129.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be counted by the table staff.

Ayes

Bentley, Christopher	Jeffrey, Linda	Sandals, Liz
Bradley, James J.	Kular, Kuldip	Sergio, Mario
Brownell, Jim	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Smith, Monique
Caplan, David	Leal, Jeff	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Levac, Dave	Van Bommel, Maria
Crozier, Bruce	Matthews, Deborah	Wilkinson, John
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dhillon, Vic	Patten, Richard	Zimmer, David
Duguid, Brad	Qaadri, Shafiq	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Racco, Mario G.	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time.

Nays

Barrett, Toby	MacLeod, Lisa	Yakabuski, John
DiNovo, Cheri	Miller, Norm	
Kormos, Peter	O'Toole, John	

The Deputy Clerk (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 28; the nays are 7.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 2132.

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No. 120A

N° 120A

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

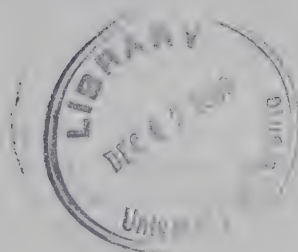
Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 15 November 2006

Mercredi 15 novembre 2006



Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 15 November 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 15 novembre 2006

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HERSHEY CANADA

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): I rise today to share a story of good corporate citizenship. When Hershey Canada discovered traces of salmonella in an externally sourced ingredient used to make its chocolate at its plant in Smiths Falls, management immediately contacted the Food Inspection Agency of the Canadian government. Hershey stopped production immediately and issued a voluntary recall of all products affected.

I want to remind parents that Halloween products were not included in this recall and were not affected.

The Hershey plant is a huge part of the Smiths Falls economy, employing some 500 individuals and supporting many local businesses, including 300 local dairy farms. Hershey is also a tourist attraction, offering free tours of their factory. Last year, this included 300,000 visitors.

I know that for the 500 workers this unscheduled lay-off is frustrating. I hope they are proud to work for a company that is so concerned about the safety of its products and those who use them. I know that Hershey is doing everything it can to solve the problem and get those workers back to work.

I want to commend Hershey for acting quickly and for issuing a voluntary recall before any reports of illness. I'm sure all members of the House would join me in expressing our support for Hershey Canada and the community of the town of Smiths Falls.

CANADIAN FILM INDUSTRY

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): Telefilm Canada recently released its yearly tabulation on the state of the Canadian film industry. Box office earnings from English-language cinema declined again this year, dropping from 1.6% to 1.1%.

Given the important contribution the film and television sector makes to its economy, Ontario needs to champion English-language cinema. The level of American productions choosing to shoot here is prone to fluctu-

tuations, leaving the long-term vitality of the sector in part dependent on a strong domestic industry.

There is robust evidence showing our domestic film industry has tremendous growth potential. Quality films made by English-Canadian filmmakers, many of whom live in Toronto, have been earning Canada a reputation internationally as a film industry to watch.

Prescriptions on fostering a strong domestic industry include Ontario reintroducing a film development fund and providing marketing support. Large American studios, thanks to deep pockets, can allocate multi-million dollar budgets toward promotion.

We in Ontario need to support marketing of Canadian films in the form of allocating screen time for Canadian movie trailers. Such a measure would help give exposure to upcoming Canadian productions. Canadian movies have been winning over audiences abroad; there is a local audience waiting to be tapped into. With an adequate amount of exposure via marketing and screen time, box office receipts for Canadian moves can grow.

CONSERVATION AREA

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): Recently, I had the pleasure of representing this government and the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, David Caplan, at the official dedication of a new 650-acre parcel of open space in north Oakville.

In partnership with Conservation Halton, the Liberal government is continuing its commitment to building a permanent greenbelt around the greater Golden Horseshoe. This government's strong commitment to environmental conservation has been a tremendous benefit to my community of Oakville, and the latest initiative builds on previous government announcements that have protected hundreds of acres of parkland, including the expansion of Bronte Creek Provincial Park by 168 acres.

This newest conservation area will create an important east-west link between the Niagara Escarpment and the Golden Horseshoe greenbelt. The new park is a fitting way to celebrate Conservation Halton's 50th anniversary as a community-based organization that is dedicated to the protection, maintenance and management of local natural resources. The organization is complemented by a team of dedicated ecologists, land use planners and educators.

To mark this great occasion, Conservation Halton is holding a contest to name the new park. It runs until November 30, and it's open to all residents of Oakville.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, the environment is an issue that is near and dear to me. I would like to wish all the participants in the name-the-park contest good luck, and eagerly await the winning entry.

WATER AND SEWER INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I rise, on behalf of John Tory and the PC caucus, to warmly welcome members of the Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association in the gallery today. They are here today and tomorrow to meet with MPPs and bring attention to the current state of our water and waste water systems in the province.

I have repeatedly questioned the McGuinty Liberals' ongoing avoidance of responsibility on this issue. I have stated and questioned the Minister of the Environment in April, June and October of this year, and not once have we heard an answer.

We have seen numerous watermain breaks, which have caused severe hardship and financial burdens on communities and businesses across the province. It has become clear that this government is either not willing or has no plan to address our aging water and waste water infrastructure. This is in spite of the fact that their own expert water panel report is nearly one year old and, as well, that the tools have been in place since 2002 through the Sustainable Water and Sewer Systems Act.

I certainly hope that the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, who at one point stated, "This is an important priority for our government," will have the courage to respond to the needs of Ontario and stop hiding behind their rhetoric.

I encourage the members of the OSWCA to ask Liberal MPPs for a straight answer as to when they will respond to their own report and when consultations will begin. It's time for the Liberals to stop saying anything to get elected, to stop breaking promises, and to get some real work done.

1340

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): I am pleased to rise in the House today to applaud the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board and the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board, as well as the local French public and French Catholic boards. These boards have worked together to bring forward a plan to build a single transportation system that will cover the entire city by 2008.

I am proud to announce that Hamilton has taken on the challenge that, in 2006, our government began implementing: reforms for student transportation. The Hamilton school boards are expected to begin this plan in February so that some bus routes can be incorporated by the fall of 2007. This is a huge responsibility that these boards assume, as this plan will transport 28,000 students

in over 500 vehicles to schools. Bell times will be staggered, along with school hours, so that every school bus will be filled and the overlapping of services will no longer be required. According to the manager Daryl Sage, "one bus, one road, one policy and one department" is how best to describe the plan. The collaboration will include a single database of students, a single digitized route map and one department for all school boards to field calls about busing issues. The goal is to gain efficiencies while maintaining the level of service.

We in Hamilton West commend the Hamilton school boards for developing a thriving partnership which will deliver student transportation effectively, efficiently and with the best of care: another fine example of leadership being demonstrated in Hamilton.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean–Carleton): Ottawa headlines today: "McGuinty Will Reconsider Provincial Cash for O-Train if Track Altered"; "McGuinty Puts Light Rail in Doubt." The \$200 million promised by the Premier to Ottawa mere days before a federal election at a star-studded Liberal love-in designed to save federal Liberals is now in jeopardy.

You'll remember, Mr. Speaker, that on May 14, 2004, three levels of Liberals said anything to get elected and promised \$600 million to the people of Ottawa. It was a great photo op. But in a change of fortune, now that the Martin-Chiarelli Liberals have been ousted, this Liberal government is planning to break one more promise to voters and renege on its \$200 million.

Liberals at all levels can't get this one right. First the former Liberal mayor couldn't convince voters that his Liberal plan was the right one. Then the federal Liberals condemned federal Conservatives on their value-for-money audit. Now, with the Martin-Chiarelli Liberals out, the McGuinty Liberals are reconsidering their \$200-million promise.

Council should have the right to determine its own transit needs without interference from the crowd opposite. The Premier should follow the federal government's example: Respect Ottawa council's rapid transit decision and keep the \$200 million he promised to Ottawa in Ottawa.

CORNWALL HOSPITALS

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): Shortly after I was first elected MPP, I presented the newly minted Minister of Health and Long-Term Care with the plans for two hospitals in my riding: the Winchester District Memorial Hospital and the Cornwall Community Hospital. Since that time I have gotten to know the minister, and he has become a true friend to both myself and my riding of Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh. That is why it is my pleasure to tell him today about the realization of a project we have both worked hard on.

On Thursday, November 9, I was present for the launching of the first phase of the redevelopment for the Cornwall Community Hospital. It was an exciting day for me and for all the people of Cornwall and area who have worked so hard to make this redevelopment a reality.

With construction well under way on the St. Joseph's complex continuing care centre, development beginning now in the Cornwall Community Hospital, and construction slated to begin next year on the Winchester District Memorial Hospital, my riding is poised to have some of the most advanced and comprehensive health care facilities anywhere in the province.

I want to thank Minister Smitherman, hospital chief executive officers Jeanette Despatie, Trudy Reid and Bonnie Ruest, the hospital boards and all the people of Cornwall, Winchester and across the riding who have worked hard to make health care renaissance a possibility and to bring those projects to fruition. The strides we have made this term are immense. I can't wait to see what we can achieve in our second term.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa—Orléans): Last week was constituency week, an opportunity for every member in this House to spend some time in their ridings. Over the course of the week we met with constituents and community groups, attended events in our communities and even had a chance to host events ourselves. I had the pleasure of hosting the Honourable Mike Colle, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, in my riding. He kindly spoke at a breakfast round table, an information session with local community groups from Orléans and the surrounding area. It was great to welcome the minister to my riding and to introduce him to some of my friends and colleagues from organizations like the Catholic Immigration Centre, the Ottawa Community Immigrant Services centre, LASI World Skills and the Somali Centre for Family Services.

Representatives from these groups had the opportunity to hear the minister speak about Bill 124, the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, an excellent piece of legislation. If passed, this bill will help foreign professionals to find work in their chosen fields. Ottawa is becoming one of Canada's main points of entry for immigrants from around the world. As of 2001, there were 185,000 people born outside Canada residing in the Ottawa-Gatineau area, making up 18% of our metropolitan population. This legislation would help ensure that the skills and talents of the thousands of internationally trained professionals coming to Canada do not go to waste.

I'd like to thank the minister for attending our round table and discussing with our Ottawa—Orléans immigrant servicing agencies the ways that the McGuinty government is helping new Canadians to find work in their own professions. Yes, the McGuinty word is good on the—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. *Interjections.*

The Speaker: Order. Members' statements.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Ms. Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): I rise today to speak about the McGuinty government's commitment to ensuring that Ontario can and will prosper in the new economy.

Recent remarks made by members of the official opposition criticizing the McGuinty government's auto strategy are just another example of how out of touch they are with Ontario's economic reality. Members opposite believe that cutting taxes whenever you can will solve all of our economic concerns. The Harris-Eves government took that approach, telling everyone that tax cuts would pay for themselves and that everything would be okay. The truth is that between fiscal 2000-01 and fiscal 2003-04, tax revenues declined by 0.7% while expenditures increased by 22%. Over their entire term in office, Ontario did not attract one new auto plant despite 19 new ones being built in the US. They refuse to learn from their mistakes, and their federal cousins are now going down that very same road.

Fortunately, we on this side of the House recognize that there needs to be investment in research, innovation and commercialization for Ontario to compete in the new economy. That's why we're investing \$1.7 billion over five years into research, commercialization and outreach programs. It's why we have the \$500-million automotive investment strategy fund that's leveraged over \$7 billion in—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

BIRTH OF MEMBER'S GRANDCHILD

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like all of you to join a proud grandma and grandpa in welcoming into this world baby boy Cowan Eric James Crozier. He was born yesterday and lives with his mother Jolean, father David and big brother Benjamin in Calgary.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark—Carleton): I beg leave to present a report on charitable gaming from the standing committee on public accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Mr. Sterling: As you know, the public accounts committee reviews the auditor's report, which was presented in late November 2005. I believe the auditor will be presenting his next report early in December, next month. This particular report, worked on by the all-party committee, relates to the oversight of the Alcohol and Gaming Commission, particularly on municipal licensing of bingos, break-open tickets and that kind of thing.

One of the particular concerns of the public accounts committee related to the interpretation by the Alcohol and Gaming Commission as to whether or not the existing order in council that is the regulation under the act permitted the AGCO, the authority, to oversee municipal licensing services. It is clear that the intent of the legislation is such. Unfortunately, there appears to be a difference with regard to the legal opinion the AGCO has and the Auditor General for Ontario.

The committee therefore recommends, as one of its major recommendations, that within 30 days this problem be resolved to give the AGCO clear authority to oversee municipal licensing activities in the province of Ontario. This is necessary in order to ensure that when a bingo is held or the proceeds from break-open tickets are received, a proper amount is given to the charities for which they were intended. So this oversight is very, very important.

As well, there are recommendations in the report dealing with the training of municipal licensing staff to ensure that they are providing the oversight needed in their municipalities over this important gaming activity in the province of Ontario. All members of the committee from all three parties want to ensure that the charities that are intended to benefit from these particular charitable gaming activities do, in fact, receive that money. I recommend that all members of the House read the report. With that, I will adjourn the debate.

The Speaker: Mr. Sterling has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on social policy and move its adoption.

The Acting Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Mr. Leal, from the standing committee on social policy, presents the committee's report as follows and moves its adoption:

Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 50, An Act respecting the regulation of the profession of traditional Chinese medicine, and making complementary amendments to certain Acts.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

VISITORS

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I wonder if all members will join me in welcoming a delegation from the Sherbourne Health Centre, a fantastic health care provider in the great riding of Toronto Centre-Rosedale.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): At the special request of the member for Niagara Centre, I have a motion to present to the House.

I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Wednesday, November 15, 2006, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Bradley has moved government notice of motion number 228. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1354 to 1359.

The Speaker: All those in favour will stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Balkissoon, Bas	Hardeman, Ernie	Parsons, Ernie
Barrett, Toby	Hoy, Pat	Peters, Steve
Bartolucci, Rick	Jeffrey, Linda	Phillips, Gerry
Bentley, Christopher	Klees, Frank	Ruprecht, Tony
Bountrogianni, Marie	Kwinter, Monte	Scott, Laurie
Bradley, James J.	Leal, Jeff	Smith, Monique
Brownell, Jim	Marsales, Judy	Smitherman, George
Caplan, David	Matthews, Deborah	Sterling, Norman W.
Chudleigh, Ted	McMeekin, Ted	Takhar, Harinder S.
Colle, Mike	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Crozier, Bruce	Miller, Norm	Watson, Jim
Delaney, Bob	Milloy, John	Wilkinson, John
Di Cocco, Caroline	Mitchell, Carol	Witmer, Elizabeth
Dombrowsky, Leona	Munro, Julia	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	O'Toole, John	Yakubuski, John
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Oraziotti, David	Zimmer, David

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Murdoch, Bill
DiNovo, Cheri	Marchese, Rosario	Prue, Michael
Horwath, Andrea	Martel, Shelley	Tabuns, Peter

The Deputy Clerk (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 48; the nays are 9.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I beg the indulgence of the House to allow the pages to assemble for introduction. I would ask all members to join me in welcoming this group of legislative pages, serving in the second session of the 38th Parliament:

Ian Attema from Erie-Lincoln; Sarah Bax from Brant; Connor Boyce from Sudbury; Andrew Curtis from Scar-

borough East; Shannon Edgar from London–Fanshawe; Or Grunebaum from York Centre; Mackenzie Gunn from Durham; Sara Hicks from Peterborough; Simon Jefferies from Cambridge; Colby Koecher from Trinity–Spadina; Philip Lee from Ottawa West–Nepean; Gloria Lee Shing Koon from Halton; Alexandra Le-Heeralal from York South–Weston; Julian Li from Don Valley West; Mariam Nawroz from Whitby–Ajax; Daniel Rickert from Kitchener Centre; Arianne Sawh from Mississauga East; Kelsea Shadlock from Simcoe–Grey; Eshan Shah from Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale; and Philip Spencer from Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford.

Applause.

The Speaker: Thank you.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

FIRE SERVICES

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): Today I rise for two important reasons; first, to pay tribute to the men and women of the Ontario fire service and the organization that represents them, the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association. I'm also pleased to inform the Legislature of the appointment of a new fire marshal of Ontario.

Last summer, Fire Marshal Bernard Moyle informed me of his intent to retire after more than 16 years as fire marshal. While I was disappointed to hear this news, it also gives me an opportunity to reflect on and applaud him for the important contributions he made to Ontario's fire services over the years. I want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to a successful career and wish Bernie much happiness.

One of Bernie's greatest achievements was helping develop and implement the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997, the most progressive fire safety legislation in Canada. Ontario's falling death rate from preventable fires is largely the result of the tireless work conducted by the Office of the Fire Marshal under his leadership.

As Bernie departs, it gives me great pleasure to announce that Patrick Burke, currently the fire chief of the Niagara Falls fire service, will be Ontario's new fire marshal. His extensive background in fire prevention and suppression began on the trucks. His career in the fire service, both in Windsor and Niagara Falls, spans well over 30 years. He is also president of the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs, where he works with fire chiefs from across Canada to reduce the loss of life and property from fire. His many years of front-line service and work at all levels of the fire service make Patrick Burke an ideal choice to succeed Bernie Moyle. I am delighted that Chief Burke has taken on the job as fire

marshal, and I know that the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association is delighted as well.

OPFFA members are committed to the safety of all Ontarians, and they deserve our support. When I met with the OPFFA yesterday at their annual legislative conference, I assured them that their efforts are recognized and appreciated by the McGuinty government.

We actively support Ontario's firefighters in many ways. Through the Ontario fire grant, the McGuinty government has invested an unprecedented \$30 million into fire services across the province, the first time in more than 20 years that the province has invested in Ontario's fire services. These funds help provide training and equipment and support fire prevention and public education programs.

OPFFA members and fire services get out our recent Fire Prevention Week message by reminding people to "Watch What You Heat" and prevent cooking fires.

Prevention is as important as response, and we're seeing some encouraging results. Over the past decade, preventable residential fires have been reduced by a third while preventable fire deaths have dropped by almost half, to the lowest in Ontario's history.

The OPFFA is our ally in fire safety. They supported our recent improvements in the Ontario fire code, which make working smoke alarms mandatory on every storey of every home and consolidate stricter fire safety requirements for hotels and motels.

We not only recognize their contributions, we honour them. Each year, we award the Ontario Medal for Firefighter Bravery. There's also the firefighters' memorial at Queen's Park, a worthy project that we were pleased to support.

The Premier also recently announced a new honour for firefighters, police and military personnel who have died in the line of duty: the Tribute to the Fallen. The first plaques for firefighters will be presented at the annual firefighters' memorial ceremony in October 2007.

As I assured the OPFFA yesterday, and as I assure the members of this House, the McGuinty government will continue to support and honour these very special people.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

SENSIBILISATION CONTRE L'INTIMIDATION

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): I rise in the House today to recognize Bullying Awareness Week.

Tous les élèves ont le droit de se sentir en sécurité à l'école et sur le terrain de l'école. Nous savons que les écoles sécuritaires sont une condition préalable au rendement des élèves.

During this week, I hope that students, teachers and parents alike will take some time to consider the issue of bullying and the role it may be playing in their lives or in the lives of others.

1410

Our government takes bullying prevention very seriously. Bullying and violent behaviour are never acceptable in Ontario's schools or communities. That is why our government has invested more than \$20 million in various initiatives to reduce these incidents and change attitudes towards bullying. I'd like to highlight some of these initiatives.

Our safe schools action team, led ably by my parliamentary assistant, Liz Sandals, released its bullying prevention report, *Shaping Safer Schools*, in late 2005, and recommendations from the report led directly to the implementation of a comprehensive, province-wide bullying prevention plan. As part of that plan, we have invested \$3 million in a three-year partnership with Kids Help Phone, thus doubling the 24-hour, seven-days-a-week, toll-free helpline's capacity to provide anonymous counselling to students who are dealing with bullying issues.

That partnership was expected to help an additional 30,000 students each year. In fact, for the first half of 2006 alone, I can report that the Kids Help Phone counsellors received and responded to 21,583 contacts from Ontario youths—an increase of 16% compared to the same period in 2005. And for bullying-related calls, the increase was a remarkable 224%.

Our government has also provided funding in the amount of \$1,500 for every elementary school, \$2,000 for every secondary school and \$1,500 for each school authority for resources to support a bullying prevention program in every publicly funded school in Ontario.

And we've established a registry of bullying prevention programs on the ministry's website to provide one-stop access to a wide range of products that may be purchased to help schools and boards combat bullying.

Au début de la présente année scolaire, une brochure sur la prévention de l'intimidation a été envoyée aux écoles, pour qu'elles la transmettent aux parents par l'entremise des élèves. Elle a aussi été affichée sur le site Web du ministère. Si les parents soupçonnent que leurs enfants font l'objet d'intimidation, ils peuvent y apprendre ce à quoi il faut faire attention, ce qu'il faut faire et où aller pour trouver de l'aide.

Especially important in this age of information technology, our government has also developed cyber-bullying software for grade 7 and 8 students. This software is intended to make our children safer online by raising awareness of the cyber landscape, especially around issues such as internet luring, cyberstalking and the use of gaming websites.

The ministry has created a bullying prevention training program for principals and vice-principals, and training for teachers is being planned for the 2007-08 school year.

Let me also add that last month our Premier announced \$2 million in funding to support character building in schools and inspire students to become caring and contributing citizens. We firmly believe that character

education in our schools will be fundamental in the fight to reduce bullying.

Our government is making significant progress on bullying prevention as part of our \$26.2-million investment to make Ontario schools safer. We are making progress by working with the people who teach our children and who run our schools.

Bien que les progrès soient manifestes, nous ne sommes pas au bout de nos peines.

So I ask that everyone join the effort to reduce bullying in schools and playgrounds around our province.

OSTEOPOROSIS

L'OSTÉOPOROSE

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): November is Osteoporosis Month.

Osteoporosis has been named the "silent thief" because it results in pain, disfigurement, loss of work, disability, reduced independence, patient isolation, and can even lead to death. Yet, for far too long, too many have suffered from osteoporosis without even being assessed for the disease, let alone diagnosed or treated.

Notre gouvernement est déterminé à ce que cela change. Nous sommes conscients du besoin de traiter cette maladie et également de sensibiliser la population aux moyens de réduire les facteurs de risque afin d'éviter que cette maladie n'afflige les Ontariens et Ontariennes. Voilà pourquoi nous avons lancé notre stratégie révolutionnaire de lutte contre l'ostéoporose l'an dernier.

The \$4-million osteoporosis strategy has five key components:

(1) Public education to improve early recognition of osteoporosis, and emphasize the importance of physical activity as well as calcium and vitamin D intake for bone health.

(2) Early diagnosis to give primary care doctors and other health care professionals the tools they need to determine when a person should get a bone mineral density test.

(3) More research to expand the knowledge base about osteoporosis, improving both prevention and treatment in the future.

(4) Improved quality of care for osteoporosis sufferers through the integration of services in the system.

(5) Guaranteeing a consistent province-wide level of care by helping medical professionals share best practices.

I'm pleased to report that in addition to this strategy, our government is working with partners on a number of innovative osteoporosis initiatives, both prevention-focused and treatment-focused.

We have provided funding to the Dairy Farmers of Canada for their Power4Bones program, which was launched in January of this year. Power4Bones encourages grade 5 students in Ontario to take care of their bones. The program responds to research outlined in the 2004 chief medical officer of health's report *Healthy*

Weights, Healthy Lives, which shows Ontario's children and youth are not eating well enough or getting enough physical activity to keep their bones healthy and strong.

I'm proud to say that for the first time, we've partnered with the Dairy Farmers of Canada on their extremely popular milk calendar, a great way of reaching millions of people across Ontario about our message of prevention. My colleague from Lanark-Carleton asked if I was going to be posing in the milk calendar, and I'm pleased to report I am not. We want people to read the milk calendar and not go away ill. This Saturday, November 18, the 2006 milk calendar will be available in most daily newspapers across Ontario.

We now know that it is equally important to reach out to those most likely to be afflicted by osteoporosis: those over 50. The statistics are chilling: One in four women and one in eight men over the age of 50 suffer from this disease. That's why our government is providing funding to Osteoporosis Canada for the delivery of the bone health program for seniors and the education program for seniors. The goal of these programs is to improve bone health and prevent osteoporotic fractures by raising awareness about the modifiable risk factors, signs and symptoms of the disease, while promoting the benefits of early diagnosis and options for treatment.

Earlier this month, the Minister of Natural Resources will be pleased to know, I joined members of the Ottawa chapter of Osteoporosis Canada for their fourth annual Bone China Tea fundraising event, held at the Château Laurier. This marked my fourth year of involvement with this event that supports the important work of Osteoporosis Canada in the areas of research, advocacy, education and patient support. The Ontario government is particularly proud of its partnership with Osteoporosis Canada.

I would like to point out today in the gallery the presence of Mr. Charles Hain and Dr. Famida Jiwa, two of our partners from Osteoporosis Canada, and commend them for their tireless efforts with respect to patient health, advocacy and awareness. Thank you both very much for being with us today.

En travaillant ensemble sur le plan de la prévention, du diagnostic et des traitements, nous aiderons les Ontariens à demeurer indépendants et actifs jusqu'à un âge avancé. Pendant tout le mois de novembre, je vous encourage à promouvoir la santé des os en commençant par vous et votre famille.

If we coordinate our efforts and continue to educate Ontarians about the prevention of osteoporosis, we can dramatically reduce the number of people who will suffer from this terrible disease, now and into the future.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL
FISCAL POLICIES
POLITIQUES FISCALES
FÉDÉRALES-PROVINCIALES

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic

renewal): I rise today to speak about an issue that affects everyone in this House; in fact, it affects all Ontarians and Canadians. I'm talking about the fiscal imbalance. This issue affects our patients, our students, our workers and our municipalities. Perhaps most importantly, it affects Ontario's families and their futures.

At the heart of this issue, and the main concern for us here in Ontario, is fairness—fairness for all Canadians, including the 39% who live in Ontario.

In June, members of this House voted unanimously in support of a resolution calling on the federal government to treat all Canadians fairly. Under the leadership of Premier McGuinty, we have done just that: We have taken Ontario's message for fairness to the federal government.

When we hosted the Strong Ontario Summit this past summer, experts and leaders from across the province told us to take this message one step further to ensure that all Ontarians understand how unfairness in our country's fiscal arrangements affects our daily lives.

1420

We're doing precisely that. Yesterday, the Premier announced fairness.ca, a new website designed to inform Ontarians about what the fiscal imbalance is, how it affects them, what they can do to help, and the steps our government is taking in urging the federal government to address this issue. We're encouraging Ontarians to speak out and work with us by urging the federal government to address this unfairness towards the people of Ontario.

People everywhere can go to fairness.ca to learn more about this important issue, and I urge all members of this House to do so. Ontario is only as strong as all of us who call this province home. Working together, we can fight for Ontario's fair share of funding from the federal government.

Les Ontariens et Ontariennes estiment qu'un Canadien est un Canadien, qu'une Canadienne est une Canadienne et ce, indépendamment du domicile, et que nous devrions tous et toutes être traités de façon équitable. Pour les soins de santé, l'éducation, la formation professionnelle et l'infrastructure, toute la population canadienne, y compris celle qui vit en Ontario mérite le même niveau de soutien de la part du gouvernement fédéral.

Compared to other provinces, Ontario receives \$86 dollars less per capita from the Canada health transfer and the Canada social transfer. This shortfall amounts to about \$1.1 billion each year that we should have to make available to our hospitals, our clinics, our colleges and our universities. An Ontarian with a bad hip is no less a Canadian than someone living in another province with a bad hip, yet the federal government provides Ontario with \$171 less for hip replacement than other provinces.

Un étudiant ou une étudiante de collège de l'Ontario n'est pas moins canadien ou canadienne qu'un étudiant ou qu'une étudiante de collège qui vit dans une autre province. Mais, le gouvernement fédéral offre à l'Ontario 112 \$ de moins par étudiant ou étudiante de collège qu'aux autres provinces.

On average, the federal government provides an unemployed worker in Ontario with \$684 less for skills training than it gives to an unemployed worker in another province. And through the employment insurance system, an unemployed worker in Ontario receives an average of \$3,640 less in EI benefits than unemployed workers in other provinces. In total, Ontario workers come up short by \$1.9 billion annually in EI benefits and training.

As Ontarians, we are all affected in some way by this unfairness. It's time to stand together as a province and get our fair share.

In the 21st century, we must invest in our people and their skills. That is how we compete in the global community. When the federal government gives less to the workers in Ontario and gives less to Ontarians for infrastructure, health care and education, it holds us back from our potential. This is simply unacceptable.

Ontarians are proud of their contributions to support public services in other provinces through the equalization program, which is designed to ensure all Canadians have access to reasonably comparable services at reasonably comparable levels of taxation. However, equalization has grown by over 30% in the last four years alone and is scheduled to grow at 3.5% per year well into the future. In fact, some provinces that receive equalization have higher fiscal capacity after federal transfers than Ontario, which does not receive, and has never received, equalization. This calls into question the legitimacy of the program, and this unfair treatment must stop.

Ontario doesn't want a special deal from the federal government. All we ask for is that the federal government treat us fairly.

I encourage all Ontarians, including all members on both sides of this House, to stand behind the Premier as he fights for fairness for all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Responses?

FIRE SERVICES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): It's a pleasure to follow the comments made by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. On behalf of John Tory and the PC caucus, I too would like to welcome the Ontario professional firefighters to Queen's Park on their lobby day.

I also want to congratulate and thank Bernard Moyle, the fire marshal for the province of Ontario, who has spent 16 years in that position. He's done an absolutely phenomenal job, and we wish him very well in his retirement. I know that he has one retirement home in the beautiful riding of Simcoe North, and we're pleased to see him in that area.

I'd also like to welcome Chief Patrick Burke from the Niagara fire service to the new position of fire marshal. I know he'll do an outstanding job.

Overall, though, I just want to say to all of the professional firefighters here today that it's a pleasure to have you with us, and we'd like to listen to your con-

cerns. I'd like to mention, in particular, Michael Gagnon, who's here from the Midland fire service, and I want to thank to Sudbury fire service for once again sending a calendar home to my wife; she does appreciate it each year.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): In response to the minister's recognition of Bullying Awareness Week, isn't it sad that we have to have the Minister of Education rising in this House to give credit to Bullying Awareness Week? Why isn't the government doing something about it? In her own statement, she admits that bullying has increased 224% within the last year. You've done absolutely nothing about this.

I refer to a statement that I made in this House on May 16, 2006. In that statement, I refer to the fact that the previous two ministers did nothing about this issue. I challenged the former minister at the time to take up Lions Quest, which is a program developed by Lions Clubs across this province. They have tried to get an appointment, a meeting, with the two previous ministers of education. They're asking this minister for a meeting so they can talk about their program, which talks about how to deal with bullying. It was developed by the Lions Clubs in this province, highly successful, being used in York region and across the province. It is volunteer-driven, not a cost to the government.

Now what do we have? The minister standing up and saying she is going to have the ministry develop another program about bullying. Minister, deal with the facts. You have a problem with bullying. People across the province know there's a problem. You're not doing anything. I'm asking you, meet with the Lions Club, implement the Lions Quest program across the province, get the volunteers engaged and do something about the issue.

OSTEOPOROSIS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): I just want to read from the Ontario osteoporosis strategy, which is put out by the ministry. In 2001, the ministry established a committee, including the Osteoporosis Society of Canada and other stakeholders, to develop an action plan with "specific, feasible recommendations for actions to advance osteoporosis prevention and care." This strategy that we heard about today is based on that action plan. I just want to thank the minister for following the wonderful lead that the former government made in this area. I congratulate them on taking up the initiative and carrying it on.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to respond to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. Here we have another day and yet another Liberal web-

site being launched. We do look forward to seeing if it's done by Besimon Byrne, for example, who have received a lot of business after having done the Liberal campaign commercials. I really do hope that this website, the fifth or sixth website, will be successful because, my goodness, Dalton McGuinty is running out of time. He has been Premier for some three and a half years and has not yet been successful in securing a better deal from Ottawa. And we hope he is successful. We hope the Premier is successful, but, my goodness, he's had a lot of troubles getting a better deal. He is hurting himself. The problem is that we have in the Premier the chief salesman for the province, who has a reputation for not keeping his word, for saying one thing and for doing another—we have, quite frankly, a salesman for this province who can't close a deal.

I hope this website works, because if he can't get it done, it's time for him to step aside and allow John Tory and the Ontario PCs to get a better deal for the province of Ontario.

1430

FIRE SERVICES

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): New Democrats are proud and pleased to join in paying tribute to the men and women of the Ontario fire service. These are brave, committed professional firefighters who protect lives on a daily basis, who risk their own on a daily basis and who do it with fearlessness, with selflessness and an incredibly high level of professionalism.

If we're going to pay tribute to these firefighters, let's not do it with hollow platitudes. If you want to pay tribute to Ontario's firefighters, then pass the NDP's Bill 111, the Bob Shaw act, the bill that Andrea Horwath, our WSIB critic, introduced and that received second reading approval by this Legislature. It's not going to stop firefighters from getting those horrible and deadly cancers as a result of rushing into burning buildings. It's not going to stop them from getting cancer because they're still going to do that job. But it will provide economic justice for them and their survivor families. You want to pay tribute—

Interjection: What about 206?

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Minister of Health.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I can wait. I need to be able to hear the member for Niagara Centre.

Mr. Kormos: You want to pay tribute? Provide economic justice to firefighters who are suffering and dying from cancer, leaving widows and widowers and children fearful for their economic future.

You want to provide justice? Then ensure that firefighting services across this province have adequate levels of minimum staffing and that their cash-strapped municipalities, whose taxpayers simply can't pay any more, receive the financial resources necessary to obtain

those levels of minimum staffing. That's how you pay tribute to firefighters.

Firefighters are less interested in plaques and pins than they are in being able to do their dangerous jobs with adequate resources and with the expectation that when they suffer illness and injury as a result of doing that job, as they inevitably will, there's going to be some economic support for them and their families.

I say to those firefighters that Bill 28, which this government has sat on for a year now, has finally been dragged back into this Legislature. Opposition members, both the official opposition and New Democrats, are going to guarantee that it gets through committee and gets third reading passage by December 14, and that the government isn't going to sit on it and allow it to mangle in some legislative orbit anymore. I pay tribute to those women and men, and New Democrats do it with meaningful impact and commitment.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): I'm pleased to respond to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. I want to provide some context to the minister's comments today. You see, Speaker, the McGuinty government promised \$300 million of new provincial funding for child care and has broken that promise. But if you listen to the McGuinty government now, it's the federal government's fault that the McGuinty government broke that promise.

The McGuinty government promised to fix the inadequate and flawed school funding formula, but they've broken that promise. And if you listen to the McGuinty government, they'd have you believe that that is the fault of the federal government today. The McGuinty government is raising university and college tuition fees through the roof, but they'd have you believe that that is the fault of the federal government.

The McGuinty government has broken the promise to reverse the downloading onto municipalities, but they would have you believe today that that broken promise is the fault of the federal government. Then there is the issue of affordable housing, the promise to build over 20,000 units of affordable housing—another promise which has been broken. But if you listen to the McGuinty government, they'd have people believe that that is the fault of the federal government as well.

Here is some other context. The McGuinty government in fact received money to reduce university and college tuition fees. Did they reduce the fees? No. They increased them. The McGuinty government received new federal money for affordable housing, hundreds of millions of dollars of it. Where is it? It's sitting in a bank account.

Here is the worst: The federal government contributes, through the national child benefit supplement, hundreds of millions of dollars to the poorest kids in Ontario and the McGuinty government claws—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. *Interjections.*

The Speaker: Order. It's time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: This morning I participated in a news conference with the Leader of the Opposition, John Tory. The purpose was to announce our Wastebusters initiative and launch a new website, www.wastebusters.ca, and blow the lid off the McGuinty government's astounding waste.

The lack of respect for taxpayers demonstrated by this government is nothing short of scandalous. From the \$91 million to fire nurses, to the \$16 million to the "I won't raise your taxes" Liberal-friendly ad firm, to hundreds of thousands to redraw the provincial trillium, this government has time and time again broken its promise to provide better value for money, to manage prudently and to guarantee a better return on investment.

Will the Premier please tell us why he continues to break these promises?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I wish the member opposite and the leader of the official opposition the very best with this new adventure they are pursuing. We will remain focused very much on the people's interests. We have brought about a number of important changes that demonstrate our continuing respect for taxpayers' money. Let me just list some of those.

We have a new sunshine law that discloses salaries to include those people working at the OPG and Hydro One. We have given the Auditor General new power to audit hospitals, school boards and children's aid societies—the broader public sector. Through our new freedom of information legislation—that has been expanded to include Hydro One, OPG and universities. In terms of fiscal accountability, we now have new legislation to ensure that the Auditor General signs off on the province's books six months before an election so that no one ever again can hide a deficit. That is also a bill that was voted against—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Runciman: The word is "disrespect" not "respect." We have a 19% increase in people making over \$100,000 a year in the province of Ontario.

Ontarians work hard to make money. They pay their taxes and expect those taxes to be managed prudently. What they get instead from this government is money blown out the door at an astonishing clip.

We want Ontarians to tell us about examples they see by visiting our website at www.wastebusters.ca—examples like how this government spent \$2 million on

commercials that claim, "The doctor will see you now," while patients are languishing in hallways, stacking up in emergency rooms and waiting for hours in walk-in clinics because they can't get the care they need because the government is more concerned about dealing with a PR crisis than an ER crisis.

Premier, please tell us how this ad has increased in any way Ontarians' access to medically necessary services.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The member opposite doesn't believe we should be bringing to the attention of the people of Ontario the fact that we have a new website. The fact is, we are now closing in on the one million mark in terms of the number of Ontarians who have visited our website. One of the things they discover when they do so is that not only are health care wait times coming down, but we are giving them information about where the 10 fastest wait times are in Ontario, so that health care consumers, in a sense, now have a real choice in terms of whether they want to go to the local hospital or to one of the 10 fastest hospitals. That gives them new information, which was never before collected. We have now made it available to Ontarians. We're being open, public and transparent about that, and Ontarians are flocking to that website. I think that is a very strong demonstration of the fact that they appreciate receiving that kind of information.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

1440

Mr. Runciman: I asked the Premier about a \$2-million ad. He might as well have burnt that \$2 million on the lawn of Queen's Park in terms of any benefit that patients across this province have received from it.

On November 1 of this year, the House debated a motion that stated that "the government should spend every single taxpayer dollar wisely and with respect for the taxpayers." Forty-eight Liberal MPPs stood and said no to the idea that taxpayer dollars should be treated with respect; 48 Liberal MPPs said they disagreed with their promises contained in the election platform on which they ran. This was to provide better value for money, to manage prudently, to guarantee a return on investment. So we know how the Liberal caucus feels, and it's that attitude that led us to establish the Wastebusters website, www.wastebusters.ca. Can the Premier tell us how he plans to start keeping those promises that he made to Ontarians during the last election?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Let me tell you about some of the other things we've done in the interest of Ontario taxpayers. We have banned taxpayer-funded partisan advertising. Now the Auditor General must approve all our ads. That was something that the party opposite voted against.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Erie–Lincoln will come to order. Order, Minister of Health Promotion; the member for Renfrew. And I won't warn the Minister for Economic Development and Trade again.

Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: By the way, that piece of legislation which requires that all advertising be vetted by the Auditor General of course was not supported by the party opposite.

We also cancelled the previous government's Householder program; that saves us \$10 million. We have started doing more work in-house instead of farming the work out to outside consultants; that has saved us \$27 million so far. One very interesting idea that we put together is that shortly we'll begin to issue paperless pay stubs. We'll give notice to our public servants of the fact that they have received their pay online; that will save us almost \$600,000. We have a whole bunch of ideas that we have put together that are so far saving us over \$800 million.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. It's very interesting to hear him talk about the list that has saved \$800 million, and yet time after time when I've asked him and the Minister of Finance to actually publish the list of the \$800 million, there has never, ever, been any such list published.

You talked about some things you say you've done in the interest of Ontario taxpayers. Let me ask you about a few things that are not in the interest of Ontario taxpayers. You say you're managing money appropriately. We have a response to a freedom of information request indicating that your government, the McGuinty Liberal government, through the Ministry of Education, spent \$558,623 on the production of a television ad on student success. It specifically said, when they answered us, that that doesn't include the cost of the media buy. Based on the precedent that you've got for the health department, that's another \$2 million. So it's \$2.5 million you spent on your self-aggrandizing political propaganda you run on the air. Will you please tell us, in light of the fact that school boards are struggling, that classrooms are short of money: How did that \$2.5-million spending of the taxpayers' money help any schools or students in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): Although the leader of the official opposition was not here at the time, I'm sure that from time to time he would have looked at the mail that was received in his mailbox and he would have been subjected to the veritable deluge of partisan propaganda with the face of the then Premier of the province of Ontario, and many members of the cabinet as well were published in those publications. We have a different approach. It's not one that is supported by the Conservative Party, obviously. They don't believe that there should be any vetting of any kind of any advertising put out by the government of Ontario. We see things differently. That's why we have a new law in place. That's why we insist that all of our advertising be vetted and approved by the Auditor General. That, we think, is the appropriate thing to do, not only in the interest of the government but, more importantly, in the interest of the people of Ontario.

Mr. Tory: I think it is a disgrace that the Premier of this province hides behind the Auditor General in not answering a question. The one thing he didn't opine on, I'll say to the Premier, is he did not opine on whether it was right to spend \$558,000 of hard-earned taxpayers' money producing a television ad and then another \$2 million to put it on the air extolling your own virtues. He didn't say that.

It gets worse. When you were Leader of the Opposition, the Premier said, and I quote, "Our government will use consultants only when absolutely necessary and when there's nobody in the public service to do that work." This year, so far, consulting spending in the Ministry of Education is up, from 2003-04, 1,277%—hundreds of thousands of dollars being spent on consultants. How is that in the best interests of taxpayers? How is that doing what you said you would do?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I think that a lot of creativity, in every sense of the word, has gone on with this particular approach.

With respect to that particular education website, again we put Ontarians on notice about a new program. The leader of the official opposition and his party may not support the notion of ensuring that young people continue to learn until at least the age of 18, but we do. It's a new program that we're putting in place. We've almost tripled the visitors to our education website. It was 2.5 million in 2003. So far, it's up to 6.8 million this year alone. We are driving Ontarians in record numbers to a website to get all kinds of new and important information about how to ensure that young people continue to learn till the age of 18.

We understand the value of doing that in a knowledge-based economy. No, we will not apologize for ensuring that Ontarians are made aware of a new program designed to ensure that we provide more educational opportunities to young people.

Mr. Tory: The suggestion to the Premier is not that he apologize for that website or for that program; it's that he should consider apologizing for spending \$558,000 of the taxpayers' money on a television ad. It's an absolute scandal.

It doesn't end there. It's going to go on and there's going to be lots more coming into wastebusters.ca. But perhaps you could tell us how it is in the best interests of hard-working Ontario taxpayers, who are struggling to pay their taxes, people who are losing their jobs—105,000 manufacturing jobs lost on your watch—that the Ministry of Education in 2005-06 spent nearly \$1.2 million on hotels—not teachers, not classrooms, not computers, not supplies. That is as much as the government grant to the Northern District School Area Board. It's more than double the grant to the Asquith-Garvey District School Area Board. It would wipe out the whole shortfall in the Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board.

What is this? It's government spending and largesse at its worst. It's a disgrace. What do you have to say about it—\$1.2 million on hotels for the Ministry of Education?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: A few things on that point: First of all, as somebody with a mortgage and three kids in university, I have some vague, passing acquaintance of what it means to have a substantial amount of money removed from my paycheque and sent to the government of the day for taxes. I understand that.

The second point is that the leader of the official opposition is somehow arguing that our bureaucrats here and anybody who's devoted to public education should hole up at Queen's Park or in the Mowat Block. We don't agree with that. There are thousands of schools around this province. Our responsibility is to get out there, speak with those people, find out what's happening on the front lines, work with them in a co-operative and collaborative way and improve the quality of public education for all our children. That's what we've done before and that's what we'll continue to do.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. Minister of Health. The member for Renfrew.

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COAL-FIRED GENERATING STATIONS

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Premier, this is an op-ed column published before the last election. It's entitled "How Liberals Will Clean The Air," written by Dalton McGuinty. I've highlighted one line of it. Premier, could you please read the highlighted section?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I'm very interested in receiving the supplementary question.

Mr. Hampton: I'm shocked and surprised; it was only one line. Since the Premier doesn't want to read it, I'll read it for him. Dalton McGuinty said, "Under my plan, Ontario's dirty, coal-burning power plants will be shut down by 2007."

That was then. Three years later, Dalton McGuinty has scored a broken promise hat trick. He's broken the promise not once, not twice, but three times. Nanticoke, Ontario's biggest polluter, is still operating at full tilt, polluting our air and contributing greatly to climate change.

My question to the Premier is this: What's your deadline now for shutting down Nanticoke? Is it 2014? Later than 2014? When?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): This government sees as a noble goal cleaning up our environment, and we remain committed to closing the coal-fired plants and reducing the emissions associated with them.

Later today, if it hasn't already been released, the Ontario Power Authority will release a document giving us a proposed strategy, something we asked them for and something we think is appropriate. We're going to look at that and invite public discussion on it.

Make no mistake, the goal remains the same: Close coal, get ourselves out of dirty coal-fired generation, re-

specting the importance and reliability of electricity. We think that was then, and is now, an important public policy goal, and we're moving in every direction to achieve it. Emissions from those plants are down 17% already. We will continue on that path until our power system is cleaned right—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: I'm shocked and surprised. First, the Premier doesn't want to read his own quote, and then he doesn't want to answer a question on his own quote.

Before the last election, the former Conservative government promised to shut down Nanticoke by 2015. Here's what Dalton McGuinty said about that: "The [Conservative] government says it would like to shut down those plants by 2015. We [Liberals] say that 2015 is too late, that it's eight years too late. By 2007, we're going to have cleaner air in this province, come hell or high water."

Before the election, 2015 was eight years too late for Nanticoke. Now you're saying 2014 may be too soon. Premier, what happened to your promise?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: I'd like to remind the leader of the NDP about their campaign document. Here's what it said: "We will close ... Ontario's coal-fired generating stations by 2007." Then, in March 2004, he said, "You should close the worst one or the worst two," but that it's not realistic. Then he was in northern Ontario, and he said, "Keep the coal plants open." When he's in southern Ontario, he says, "Close the coal plants."

This government remains firm and committed to the goal of cleaning up our electricity supply. It is a challenging task. This government's moving in that direction. Emissions are down 17% from coal-fired generation to date. We will continue to move in the right direction, with or without that support. It's the appropriate public policy. It means cleaner, greener power. I wish they'd support us on things like greener—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

Mr. Hampton: To the Premier: I'm really shocked and surprised. First, the Premier won't read his own quote, then he won't answer the question, and now the Minister of Energy won't answer the question. So I'll try again.

Nanticoke is the single biggest polluter in Ontario and Canada's worst greenhouse gas emitter. If we want to clean up our air and get serious about addressing climate change, Nanticoke has to be shut down. The reality is this, Premier: Before the last election, you used kids with asthma, you used seniors with oxygen tanks and you used people worried about climate change as pawns in a quest to win votes. And all the time you had no plan, no plan whatsoever, to shut down Nanticoke. Premier, how could you do that?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: Unlike the member opposite, we believe reducing emissions associated with coal-fired generation is an important public health issue. That is why we are moving aggressively to close the plants. I'll

remind the member of what he said himself in that CBC radio interview: "You can't in the space of three years close all the coal-fired plants." Now, that was after he said he would do that. Then he sent a letter to the Premier, dated September 26, 2005: "Why not support spending money on implementing clean coal technology?" His critic says it doesn't work.

This is a challenging goal. We are moving towards it: a 17% reduction in the amount of coal-fired generation to date. The emissions related to coal are down, including CO₂. That is a bona fide public health policy, an environmental policy. We will continue—

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. Supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: I realize that shutting down Nanticoke is a big undertaking, but here is the reality under the McGuinty government: You are no closer to shutting down Nanticoke today than you were when the Premier made his promise. Many of your private gas plants are stalled. Some of your wind farms have been cancelled. Your sweetheart deal with Bruce Power could cost Ontario Hydro consumers \$460 million a year in penalty fees. And you're blowing \$40 on nuclear for every dollar you put into conservation and energy efficiency. I say the McGuinty government's talk on this is cheap.

My question to the Premier is this: When are you actually going to do something that could be legitimately described as action when it comes to shutting down Nanticoke?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: Well, let's just review what the member just said. I imagine he hasn't heard of the East-view landfill gas station—up and running since we took over; Glenn Miller hydro station up and running; Kingsbridge wind farm up and running; Hamilton digester gas up and running; Erie Shores wind up and running—1,350 megawatts of clean, renewable power online; Big Becky, the tunnel under Niagara Falls, under construction.

Unfortunately, your government didn't do these things when they should have been done 10 years ago, eight years ago. In three years, there are 3,000 megawatts of new power online, 10,000 additional units, \$15 billion dollars in investment, hundreds of new jobs. We're much closer today to closing Nanticoke than we would have been had this government not taken those steps. We will continue to aggressively pursue that agenda in as fast a time frame as we can—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: Here's the reality: Nanticoke produces as much pollution as 3.3 million cars in one year. It's Ontario's single largest source of smog-causing nitrogen oxide emissions, of greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change, and of mercury and sulphur dioxide. And it's a major contributor to the air pollution that kills 5,900 Ontarians a year, something the Ontario Medical Association calls a public health crisis. So I would assume, then, that the Premier can tell us, when will Nanticoke be shut down—2014? Later than 2014? When is the McGuinty government going to shut down the biggest single air polluter in the province, Nanticoke coal-fired station?

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Hon. Mr. Duncan: It is vitally important that as we move to that closure, we continue to reduce the emissions associated not just with Nanticoke but with all the coal-fired plants. The member is very careful with his question. He doesn't remind people that when he's up north, he says, "Keep the coal-fired plants open," and when he's down south, he says, "Close them." He says one thing in the north and one thing in the south. He opposed every one of our clean, green energy projects because they were private power. Well, yes they were. And do you know what? They're working and producing clean power that will give us the flexibility to close Nanticoke at an appropriate time, ensuring system reliability.

We acknowledge that this has been a difficult, challenging file. We remain committed to the eventual removal of all coal-fired generation in Ontario. We're going to continue reducing emissions as we move towards that goal, not only of NO_x and SO_x, but more importantly, CO₂, mercury and particulates, so that our air is cleaner, our environment is better and all Ontarians benefit from a healthier, cleaner environment and place to live. That's our goal; we're moving toward it.

The Speaker: New question. The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): My question is for the Premier. I'd like to read you a couple of quotes:

"We're going to shut down those dirty coal furnaces by 2007, no ifs, ands or buts."

"Under my plan, Ontario's dirty coal-burning power plants will be shut down by 2007."

Those quotes came from none other than yourself, Premier. You have now broken that promise not once, not twice, but three times. How could you be so completely wrong? You now trot out the OPA to say you plan to shut down coal-fired power by 2014. Premier, why would anyone believe a single word you say on this subject, or any other, for that matter? Isn't this just further proof that you will say anything, you will do anything, just to get a vote?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, to the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: This government remains committed to the goal of reducing emissions associated with coal-fired generation. But let me remind the member opposite of what happened to coal emissions under his government. Emissions from coal plants: SO₂, 51% increase; nitrous oxide, 25% increase; CO₂, 56% increase. Under this government, SO₂, down 28%; nitrous oxide, down 34%; CO₂, down 15%. We acknowledge the challenge associated with getting our coal-fired generating down. We acknowledge the difficulty. We remain committed to the goal. We've already had significant achievement. We're going to continue to move in that direction. It's the right thing for Ontario; it's the right thing for the people of Ontario.

Mr. Yakabuski: Premier, this is about your promise. This is about your credibility. You said that your coal shutdown policy was based on the best advice available

to you at that time. We know that advice never came from OPG, which operates the plants. We know it never came from the IMO. Premier, I asked your energy minister at estimates to give the names of those so-called experts who advised you on this policy. He told me at that time that he would supply me with those names. None came forward at estimates; they have not come forward since. I'm going to ask you today: Give us the names of those experts or plain and simple admit that your policy was just plain and simple made up, that you perpetrated on the people of the province of Ontario to get their vote, a big, fat lie.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I need the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke to withdraw.

Mr. Yakabuski: I withdraw that, Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: Mr. Speaker, the member is right: We certainly didn't take advice from OPG when we got to office, because you decimated the company. You politicized it. We had to change the board. We had an energy system—

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member for Leeds–Grenville, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and the member for Simcoe–Grey need to all come to order.

Minister?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: We had an energy system that was on its knees and a public generator that was effectively bankrupt. We have moved cleanly and deliberately on the coal file in a prudent fashion to ensure system reliability. We look forward to the day when they're closed. We've laid out plans; we're putting out discussion papers for further input.

Again, I remind the member: SO₂ increase, 51% under your government; nitrous oxide increase, 25%; CO₂ increase, 56%. We've reduced all of them. We're continuing on that path in a way that ensures system reliability as we restore the damage that party did to Ontario's electricity sector.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Premier, Statistics Canada says that the value of manufacturing shipments from Ontario factories has now declined to the lowest level since the blackout of 2003. In just one month, Ontario's manufacturing shipments fell an astonishing 5%. Ontario's manufacturing recession is getting worse each month under the McGuinty government; 136,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs have been lost while your government has done virtually nothing.

Premier, when is the McGuinty government going to get off the sidelines and start doing something about the disastrous loss of manufacturing jobs in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I'm not sure where the leader of the NDP has been, but he cannot have been in

Ontario and he cannot have had the opportunity to observe the efforts we've been making in our government. Whether you're talking about the half-billion-dollar partnership we have with the auto sector, which he opposes; whether it is the half-billion-dollar partnership with the manufacturing sector, again, which he opposes; whether it's the \$900-million support, so far, for the forestry sector, which he opposes, we have done much to partner with Ontarians.

I can say this as well: Had you asked any economist three years ago what would happen to the Ontario economy if the dollar were to appreciate by 40% and the price of oil were to triple, I bet you that economists would have said that the Ontario economy would be suffering severe hardship. The fact of the matter is that those circumstances did obtain. What happened here in Ontario? Ontarians, working hard and demonstrating their entrepreneurialism, generated 250,000 net new jobs. That's the real story here in Ontario.

Mr. Hampton: The Premier believes that Wal-Mart jobs will replace good manufacturing jobs. I'm afraid, Premier, that's just not the case.

You talk about \$900 million for the forest sector. No one across northern Ontario has seen even a fraction of that amount from the McGuinty government.

You talk about the auto sector? The biggest decline is, in fact, happening in the auto manufacturing sector, which posted a decline of 8.2% in one month. Premier, you have to only pick up a paper anywhere in southern Ontario to see a list of auto parts plants that have closed or are closing.

My question again is this: When is the McGuinty government going to stop blaming this or blaming that, get off of the fence and start doing something about the disastrous loss of good-paying manufacturing jobs in Ontario?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The only blaming that's going on here is coming from the other side today.

The leader of the NDP may not be satisfied with the fact that, for the first time since the invention of the car, we are now, two years running, the number one auto producer in North America. He may not be satisfied with that, but we think all of the workers in the auto sector are.

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Beyond that, with our ReNew Ontario \$30-billion, five-year infrastructure plan, we are creating hundreds of thousands of jobs, to say nothing of our \$15-billion plan for energy. Today in Ontario, there are at least 100 hospital construction projects under way, there are 3,000 school repair, renovation or construction projects under way, there are countless kilometres of roads and bridges that are being built, to say nothing of all of the investment in new public transit. That is the result of the budgetary policy coming from this government and that will serve to help Ontario families in this period of more economic—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. New question.

ELECTORAL REFORM RÉFORME ÉLECTORALE

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a question to the minister of democratic renewal on election reform. Minister, I understand that the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform began its deliberations a number of weeks ago. From looking at their website at www.citizensassembly.gov.on.ca, I see that they have posted a number of dates and locations for public consultations. This is a great opportunity for all Ontarians to share their views on this important topic of election reform.

Minister, my question is the following: If my grandmother or my cousin had a great idea of how to make democracy and the election system more efficient and meaningful, could they enter this public consultation process easily? How difficult is it for ordinary citizens to participate in this reform?

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I'd like to thank the member from Davenport for his question. I know that he believes very strongly in the work done by the citizens' assembly and its significance for the people of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The member for Niagara Centre will come to order. I will not warn you again.

Minister.

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to see the enthusiasm of the NDP for the citizens' assembly. We're advancing an ambitious democratic renewal agenda. We want to encourage many Ontarians to review our electoral system, and that is why we asked the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform to hold public consultations.

Le calendrier de consultation publique est affiché en ligne. Le site Web sera mis à jour au fur et à mesure que d'autres sites sont ajoutés. À ce jour, 37 sites ont été confirmés.

If Ontarians cannot attend, like your grandmother, but would like to express their views, online, fax and mail submissions are also welcome. The examination of Ontario's electoral system will re-engage voters and reduce voter cynicism. This government has taken an unprecedented step in empowering the citizens of this province and wants them to have the final say on any potential electoral—

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr. Ruprecht: The right to vote for one's representative came at a high price. Even in our own country, right here, it took over a hundred years for our electoral system to evolve so that all Canadians can vote and have a right the vote. Yet, two days ago, at this municipal election that we've just had, we had an abominable turnout. The voter turnout was less than 50%. Madam Minister, you need a plan. My question is the following: We want to engage as many Ontarians as possible,

including our young people. How do we go about that, and what are we doing to increase especially the number of youth engaged in this particular process?

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: Our government feels it's very important to engage the youth in this process, and that's why a Students' Assembly on Electoral Reform has been established, with one student from each of the 103 ridings. They're in the gallery today, and I thank them for the work they're about to do. They will spend this weekend learning and debating our current electoral system as well as others from around the world, and they will then make a recommendation to the Citizens' Assembly based on their values. This is an example of how we can engage the youth and work to increase their future participation in our democracy. I would like to thank them for their hard work. They're joining us today in a reception at 4 o'clock. I'd like to welcome everyone here to meet their students, the students who represent their ridings, and to encourage them on this very important democratic process.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo—Wellington): My question is for the Minister of Tourism. I think he's perhaps just in the lobby. Okay; there's the Minister of Tourism.

My question concerns the western hemisphere travel initiative or passport issue. This program may soon require all travellers to carry a passport in order to cross the US border and enter into the United States. Tourism operators, including the Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association, have expressed great interest in this issue. Many believe that the passport requirement, if implemented, would have severe negative impacts on Ontario tourism.

Almost six months ago, this House unanimously passed a resolution stating that the passport issue would cause significant and unnecessary damage to tourism and trade in both countries. Our leader, John Tory, initiated the resolution and all parties in this House endorsed the call for action. Will the minister inform the House, since that resolution passed six months ago, what specific actions he has undertaken to address this pending crisis in Ontario tourism?

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): You know how the government says, "I'm glad you asked that question"? I'm actually glad you asked that question, because you have identified an issue which, as you know, the province of Ontario has taken a leadership position on in terms of raising the issue.

You will recall that initially the federal government said—the Prime Minister was at a conference in Cancun, and he said, "Folks, get used to it. Get ready; it's a done deal." The province of Ontario said, "We don't believe that is the case. We should continue to fight this." As you will know, the Premier and I went to Washington to lobby on behalf of the position of the province of Ontario that this would be disastrous for us. We have had ongoing meetings with representatives in the United States

Congress, representatives of the administration in the United States, those who are involved in state Legislatures, governors of the various jurisdictions that are near the border and people who are interested in tourism and on an ongoing basis have made that case. I have been in discussion personally with a senator in the United States who took a lead on this issue and had a positive effect. So we've enlisted allies on the US side and we're in a much better position today than when we were going to throw in the towel a while ago.

Mr. Arnott: The minister does not fully appreciate the gravity of this situation. Among the travelling public, there continues to be a great deal of confusion about the passport issue as to when they are going to need a passport or be turned back at the border. We do know that the passport requirement begins to kick in in less than two months, starting with air travellers entering the United States. But the provincial government has done next to nothing to clarify this for the travelling public.

Last Wednesday, during constituency week, I attended an important briefing on the passport issue at the US consulate just down University Avenue. Ministry of Tourism staff were there. A senior State Department official told us that notwithstanding the extension to the passport requirement for land crossings to June 2009, the administration hopes to implement it sooner than that, as soon as logistically possible. I've arranged for a meeting this Friday with the new US Consul General, Mr. John Nay, to discuss the passport issue and Ontario tourism. Will the minister join me for that meeting and work with me to help find solutions so that the deepening crisis in tourism can be reversed?

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I don't want to interfere with the member's individual meeting. I know that he may have some confidential matters to discuss with that individual at this time. But let me tell you, if you want to listen only to what the US administration is saying on this and not to what the United States Congress is saying, that's fine. I know the administration's position. The administration can't wait to implement this, and time after time they've said that. I have said to the US ambassador to Canada that that is not acceptable for the people of Ontario and the people of Canada. I will not engage in crackpot realism which says the inevitable is what the administration wants, when I know in the system of the United States government, the Congress has a big say in this. The Congress implemented a 17-month delay so that they could look at alternatives. We have allies in state Legislatures and in Congress across the United States, if not in the administration. The federal government can deal with the administration as they see fit and will do so. I am pleased now that the federal government has joined us publicly in the position—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

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FIREFIGHTERS

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is for the Premier. Professional firefighters are here from

across Ontario on their annual conference and Queen's Park lobby day. They're united in calling for presumptive legislation for firefighters as described in my Bill 111, which people will remember was supported by all parties at second reading about a month ago.

Presumptive legislation means that firefighters and their families would no longer suffer the indignity and devastation of having their compensation claims for workplace occupational diseases denied at the WSIB. Science unequivocally links certain cancers to firefighters' exposure to toxins and chemicals that they face on the job in their daily work.

Premier, will you and your government clear the way, for Bill 111 or an identical bill under your own pen, clear the way to ensure that this legislation goes forward before the end of your mandate?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): I thank the member for her question and thank her, as well, for her advocacy on behalf of all the firefighters and their families who are here. As a government, we certainly extend our condolences to those family members who have lost loved ones as a result of cancers within the workplace. We respect their hard work and dedication. Since we've taken office, we have had a very good working relationship with the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association. I think we've demonstrated on a number of fronts how we've been able to move forward on initiatives that were long outstanding with them.

The issue of presumptive legislation is not something new in this province. There have been ongoing discussions, and we are engaged in serious discussions with the Ontario professional firefighters and the WSIB, because this is a very complex issue. It is an important issue. At the same time—the member would like to think that there's a very simple fix to this—it is important that as we move forward, we get this legislation and make sure it is the right legislation. We're going to continue to engage and work with the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association and the WSIB to get it right as we move forward.

Ms. Horwath: I appreciate that response, but firefighters will be telling all members today that Bill 111 is getting it right. It is exactly what they want to see in terms of legislation and it's what needs to happen in the province of Ontario to give them justice for their occupational diseases. It has the support of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, some 40 municipalities, including every single major city in the province of Ontario, as well as many editorial boards of newspapers. Our firefighters have broad public support for this cause, and everybody in this Legislature knows it.

Firefighters are here in the galleries today, as we've already acknowledged and recognized. What we need to hear and what they need to hear from the government is a simple yes to Bill 111. Are you going to say yes to Bill 111? Will you guarantee that we'll see presumptive

legislation in the province of Ontario like so many other provinces already have? All we need to hear is a simple yes.

Hon. Mr. Peters: As a government, we support the concept of presumptive legislation but, at the same time, we want to make sure we get the legislation right. That's why I asked my parliamentary assistant, the member from Thornhill, to undertake a comprehensive review of what other jurisdictions are doing. That report was completed and presented to me. That report is now part of the ongoing discussions with the Ontario professional firefighters and that will make the basis of that discussion.

As well, I welcome the member's further comments. That report is available on the Ministry of Labour's website, and I would appreciate any comments that she may have in that regard. We value the hard work of our professional firefighters. We're going to continue to work with them. As well, I point out that it is not something that we alone can do. We need to work with the firefighters and the WSIB. We're going to work with all those individuals to ensure that this is the best legislation.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Minister, as you're well aware, the area I represent, Stoney Creek, hosts many, many visitors, hundreds and thousands of visitors every year to our museums, our wineries and the wonderful Niagara Escarpment. We're also in an area where many hundreds and thousands of buses and visitors transit the highway going from Toronto into the Niagara region to visit all the amenities there. We have a lot of people coming from the United States past our door and going off to Toronto.

This is all good. It's all good for tourism and it is all good for the economy, but there is a downside. One of the reasons I actually ran for election and ran with this party is concern for the environment. There is an impact on the environment with all this traffic, especially the larger vehicles, and I would like to know what is being done to address this issue.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Transportation): I would like to thank the member for her unwavering commitment not only to the environment, but to her riding and to the arts and culture of this province. I want to tell not only the member, but the other honourable members of the House, about something very exciting that occurred this week. I was proud to stand with our partners in the Ontario Motor Coach Association when they unveiled the 2007 engine. Actually, they are ahead of the game. The legislation requires them to have something by next January. They have gone way out on a limb, and gone out first and foremost. In fact, industry reports indicate that the new engine will use ultra-low-sulphur diesel fuel, which will cut particulate matter emissions by 90%. Nitrous oxide emissions will be cut by 50% from the level of four years ago.

Already, they're making the switch to the new ultra-low-sulphur fuel as of this month. We're pleased to be a part of what they consider a sustainable approach to dealing with clean air in this province.

Ms. Mossop: This is all good news. I also am appreciative that our government has moved forward with the ethanol initiative as well, because that will cut emissions tremendously. But we're still dealing with a lot of the volume—a lot of volume. If you have ever travelled that area—quite frankly, what I do when I have an event in my riding where a cabinet minister is coming down for a visit, is ensure that we always get those cabinet ministers travelling down for their visit during rush hour so that they can experience the parking lot called the QEW that commuters in my area have to experience day in and day out. Cobwebs sort of form on the front of the car sometimes while you're waiting to move forward about 10 feet. That creates an additional problem for our environment because the cars are just idling and filling up the air. So I also need to know from you what we're doing, as a government, to clear up that parking lot and get things moving.

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: There's no question that what the member is talking about is the use of sustainability as part of planning, using your highways differently, integrating the concept of sustainability into the planning, and that's exactly what we're doing.

Let me tell you about some of the activities. Within my own ministry, all our activity and operation has been improved to reduce overall energy consumption. By 2010, the province will have provided \$1.6 billion in gas tax money to Ontario municipalities. We have established the Greater Toronto Transit Authority to take a region-wide approach to transit and to transportation. We're really interested in alternative fuels, and we have developed the greater Toronto transportation fare card, which will enable people to move back and forth with ease in the transit system. We have invested \$110 million in HOV—high-occupancy vehicle—lanes where 10,000 to 15,000 cars every day take a commuter with them to and from work, which makes a difference in the congestion in our highways.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I have a question to the Premier. I would like to call your attention to James Wallace's recent Osprey column, entitled "Triple Whammy... Property Assessments in 2008." After question period, the assembly will be voting on your time allocation motion that shuts down debate on the bill that Mr. Wallace references in his column. As you know, schedule A results in three years of assessments hitting seniors and working families all at once, conveniently after the next provincial election. Premier, why is it that neither your Minister of Finance nor his parliamentary assistant even mentioned this provision of the bill during debate? What is the McGuinty government trying to hide?

1530

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I know this is something that the member opposite has a particular interest in, but it is without foundation.

To repeat something that's been stated in here so many times now, we are working as hard as we can to clean up the mess created by the former government when it comes to property tax assessments. It's not the kind of thing that we can clean up overnight. It's the kind of thing that took a lot of time to create by way of a mess. What we have committed to doing is getting the best possible advice that we can, taking the necessary and appropriate time to ensure that we come up with some kind of solution that will in fact be both meaningful and helpful to Ontario homeowners in particular. So we're going to take the necessary time to get it right.

Again, I just don't understand where the member opposite is coming from when he says that somehow there's some kind of a conspiracy, some kind of a hidden plot here to wreak havoc on the people of Ontario.

Mr. Hudak: I'd encourage the Premier to read his own legislation. Bill 51 resets the date for property taxes after the next election. We'll see an assessment time from January 1, 2008, reset from January 1, 2005. This is three years of assessment increases all coming down on the backs of working families and seniors, conveniently after the next election. I can't believe you don't know that's in your legislation. Maybe the Premier is simply in denial and is willing to say anything or do anything to get re-elected, including denying this provision of his legislation. I refer him to schedule A of Bill 151. In fact, not a single member of the Liberal caucus—not the Premier, not the finance minister, not the PA, not a single Liberal member—refers to this section of the bill, a triple whammy of property assessments happening after the next election.

Premier, please tell me you've made a drafting error. Please tell me you're not trying to hide another big tax increase until after the next election. Please tell me that you've actually read your bill.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The member opposite is telling us that there is a conspiracy afoot here for all to see and it's related to a provision found in the bill itself.

We have heard the public's concerns about the assessment system. We have done a few things that are helpful, in addition to the fact that we're taking a serious look at this and reviewing it now. We've already increased the property tax credit for seniors from \$500 to \$625. That's an increase of 25%. The party opposite voted against that. And last year we granted MPAC more time to conduct assessments and allow the public more time to appeal assessments.

I think, as Dr. Phil says, the best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour. If Ontarians want to know what we're going to do with respect to this particular issue, they should look at what we've already done for seniors, they should look at the effort we've made to work with MPAC to give them more time to address

these issues, and they should look at our commitment to work with Ontarians to clean up the mess left by previous government.

PAPER MILL

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): My question is to the Premier. The community of Iroquois Falls is very concerned about Abitibi Consolidated's proposal to sever its hydroelectric dams from its forest products company in Iroquois Falls. Mill workers in Iroquois Falls and community members are looking around the province at what's happening in other paper mills, where they've had to buy their electricity from the grid and are in pretty dire straits as a result when it comes to their economic situation because of electricity prices.

I have a simple question: Are you prepared to tell Abitibi-Price no to severing those power dams to make sure that electricity generated by those dams continues going at the rate it is to that particular mill?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): I appreciate the question from the member. This is a local issue for me, one that I've certainly kept on top of and have been speaking to the company about.

I must say to the member, quite frankly, that this issue doesn't concern me at all. The papermaking facility in Iroquois Falls is one of the best in the world. It is a very sustainable operation. It's got some of the best workers in the world in that particular area making high-quality paper. Their markets are sound. It's a very efficient operation. The company is obviously just trying to increase its cash flow so that they can invest more in their facilities right across Canada, especially in Ontario. We're seeing those investments coming forward, and I think it's a very positive move on their behalf.

Mr. Bisson: You should be concerned, because what it means is, if Abitibi decides in the end to either spin off those power dams to sell their electricity on the market or become exporters themselves of the electricity, that mill is going to go down. The community needs to know that they have a champion. They look at you and they're not seeing it.

When we were in government the same proposal was made, and our government said no and stopped the severance of that dam. We ask you again: Are you prepared to do what we did back in the early 1990s, making sure that Abitibi doesn't become an exporter of electricity and continues to be a producer of paper in the community of Iroquois Falls?

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: Again I'd say to the member that we feel that for our companies to be strong, they have to examine every business transaction and process of raising their revenues that they can, and to develop a revenue stream from the hydro side of the company strengthens the company. A stronger company means more jobs in

northern Ontario, and we think that's very important. We want to encourage all our companies—as we are, all of them—to generate as much electricity as possible. We're encouraging our other companies to get into the business, to get into cogen to further enhance their water power facilities if they can, Espanola being one example where there is potential.

We want to work with the companies. We want the companies to be strong. We want to make sure that they exercise all the possibilities they have in order to be sustainable.

PETITIONS

HIGHWAY 417

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas modern highways are the economic lifelines to communities across Ontario and crucial to the growth of Ontario's economy; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has been dealing with the planning and design of the extension of Highway 417 for several years; and

“Whereas the previous Conservative government followed through with their commitment to extend Highway 417 to Arnprior; and

“Whereas Highway 417/17 is part of the Trans-Canada Highway system; and

“Whereas local municipal governments, the county of Renfrew and MPP John Yakabuski have continued to press the Liberal government on this issue;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Liberal government move as swiftly as possible to approve the extension of Highway 417 through Arnprior to Renfrew and beyond and that this be included in their next five-year plan.”

I support this petition and affix my name to it.

TUITION

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My petition reads, “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario,” from the University of Toronto Students' Administrative Council.

“Whereas the Ontario Liberal government cancelled the tuition fee freeze after only two years and approved fee increases of up to 36% over the next four years; and

“Whereas tuition fees in Ontario have increased by more than four times the rate of inflation over the past 15 years; and

“Whereas a majority of Ontarians oppose tuition fee increases and support greater public funding for colleges and universities; and

“Whereas improvements to student financial assistance are undermined by fee increases; and

“Whereas the Ontario government's recent increase to student loan limits is set to push student debt to approximately \$28,000 for a four-year program; and

“Whereas per student investment in Ontario still lags significantly behind the vast majority of jurisdictions in North America;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, support the Canadian Federation of Students' call to stop tuition fee hikes and petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“—reduce tuition fees to 2004 levels for all students in Ontario and implement an immediate tuition fee freeze;

“—increase public funding for post-secondary education to promote access and quality;

“—expand access to financial aid in Ontario, especially for part-time students; and

“—double the number of upfront, need-based grants for Ontario students.”

I'm in agreement with the petition and would affix my signature thereto.

FAIR ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas foreign-trained professionals are being denied recognition of foreign credentials and international work experience, preventing them from finding employment in their chosen fields and denying them the opportunity to fully realize their potential, it is necessary that Bill 124, the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, be passed as quickly as possible to address this growing social issue;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That Bill 124, the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, be passed as quickly as possible to help foreign-trained professionals work in their chosen fields.”

I have the signatures of approximately 30 people here and I'll be adding my signature to that petition.

1540

PROSTATE CANCER

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to have this chance to present a petition from the riding of Durham which reads as follows:

“Whereas prostate specific antigen (PSA) tests are frequently used to screen patients for prostate conditions, including cancer; and

“Whereas there is currently a double standard because men usually pay to have a PSA test as part of a routine medical examination, while women have all cancer screening tests covered by OHIP;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, urge the” McGuinty government “to review its policy on funding PSA testing for men with a view to including this as a service wholly covered by OHIP.”

I'm pleased to endorse that, present it to Andrew from Scarborough East, and sign it on behalf of my constituents.

FRAIS DE SCOLARITÉ

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–Baie James): J'ai une pétition ici de la part des étudiants de l'Université Laurentienne qui dit :

« Attendu que le gouvernement libéral de l'Ontario a annulé le gel de frais de scolarité après deux ans seulement et a autorisé des hausses de frais de scolarité qui, dans certains cas, s'élèvent jusqu'à 36 % sur les quatre prochaines années;

« Attendu que les frais de scolarité en Ontario ont augmenté de plus de quatre fois le taux d'inflation depuis les 15 dernières années;

« Attendu que la majorité des Ontariens et des Ontariennes s'opposent aux hausses des frais de scolarité et sont pour l'augmentation du financement public accordé aux collèges et universités; et

« Attendu que les améliorations apportées à l'aide financière aux étudiants sont amoindries par les hausses des frais de scolarité;

« Attendu que la hausse récente par le gouvernement de l'Ontario des limites d'emprunt entraînera une augmentation de l'endettement étudiant à près de 28 000 \$ pour un programme d'études de quatre ans; et

« Attendu que l'investissement par étudiant en Ontario est encore très loin derrière comparativement à la grande majorité des juridictions en Amérique du Nord;

« Par conséquent, nous, les soussignés et soussignées, appuyons les revendications de la Fédération canadienne des étudiantes et étudiants en faveur de l'arrêt des hausses des frais de scolarité et demandons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« (1) de réduire les frais de scolarité aux niveaux de 2004 pour tous les étudiants et étudiantes de l'Ontario et de mettre en oeuvre un gel des frais de scolarité;

« (2) d'augmenter les dépenses publiques pour l'éducation postsecondaire pour promouvoir l'accès et la qualité; et

« (3) d'améliorer l'accès à l'aide financière aux études en Ontario, surtout pour les étudiants et étudiantes à temps partiel; et

« (4) de doubler le nombre de bourses initiales accordées en fonction du besoin pour les étudiants et étudiantes de l'Ontario. »

Je signe cette pétition de la part de M^{me} Martel.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have a petition today dealing with access to trades and professions in Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

"Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent, arbitrary and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional

and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

"Whereas action by Ontario's trades and professions could remove many such barriers, but Ontario's trades and professions have failed to recognize that such structural barriers exist, much less to take action to remove them, and to provide fair, timely, transparent and cost-effective access to trades and professions for new Canadians trained outside Canada;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario Legislative Assembly urge the members of all parties to swiftly pass Bill 124, the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006, and to require Ontario's regulated professions and trades to review and modify their procedures and qualification requirements to swiftly meet the needs of Ontario's employers, Ontario's newcomers and their own membership, all of whom desperately need the very skills new Canadians bring working for their organizations, for their trades and professions, and for their families."

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature to it, and give it to our new page here, Julian.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have more petitions to do with Hydro One forestry services in Parry Sound–Muskoka.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Hydro One Networks Inc. provides hydro to many communities in the region of Parry Sound–Muskoka; and

"Whereas there have recently been several lengthy power outages in this region affecting both private residences, schools and businesses; and

"Whereas rural customers pay among the highest distribution and delivery charges for electricity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Energy and the Ontario Energy Board require Hydro One Networks Inc. to make improvements in line maintenance and forestry management in the region of Parry Sound–Muskoka to ensure reliable energy for its customers."

I support this petition, affix my signature, and give it to page Daniel.

FAIR ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): I have a petition on Bill 124.

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas internationally educated professionals could make much greater contributions to Canada's society and economy than they are currently allowed to make;

"Whereas a lack of fair and timely recognition of their credentials is a key element in preventing them from making that contribution;

"Whereas this lack of recognition imposes unfair and unnecessary burdens on these new Canadians and their families;

"Whereas Bill 124, the" so-called "Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006, will not, as written, provide the access to credentials recognition needed by internationally educated professionals;

"Whereas the Legislature needs to substantially strengthen this bill;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To amend the bill in these eight areas:

"(1) Establish independent regulatory appeal tribunals to hear appeals to rejection of registration in a professional body, these tribunals to be adequately resourced for high-quality reviews in a timely way.

"(2) Provide legal and professional advice to new Canadians seeking recognition of credentials. This includes provision of trained advocates, without charge to applicants....

"(3) Name the regulated professions that are covered by the act in the act and give authority to allow the adding of more regulated professions in future.

"(4) Fully establish a fair registration practices code in the legislation.

"(5) Establish a department within the access centre established by the act which will evaluate the equivalence of standards between regulatory bodies and educational institutions in different countries and in Ontario. This data will be provided to regulatory bodies to assist them in determining equivalence of credentials.

"(6) Give the minister, upon recommendation from the fairness commissioner, power to eliminate registration practices that are contrary to the fair registration practices code.

"(7) The fairness commissioner to report annually to the Legislature on the impact of this legislation on the employment of internationally educated professionals and to report on the success rate of internationally educated professionals applying for certification.

"(8) The fairness commissioner to be appointed by the Legislature."

I agree with this petition and affix my signature thereto.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): Thanks to the Newcomer Women's Services of Toronto, I have this very positive petition on access to trades and professions in Ontario directed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

"Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent, arbitrary and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

"Whereas action by Ontario's trades and professions could remove many such barriers, but Ontario's trades and professions have failed to recognize that such structural barriers exist, much less to take action to remove them, and to provide fair, timely, transparent and cost-effective access to trades and professions for new Canadians trained outside Canada;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario Legislative Assembly urge the members of all parties to swiftly pass Bill 124, the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006, and to require Ontario's regulated professions and trades to review and modify their procedures and qualification requirements to swiftly meet the needs of Ontario's employers, Ontario's newcomers and their own membership, all of whom desperately need the very skills new Canadians bring working for their organizations, for their trades and professions, and for their families."

In support, I sign this petition.

HEALTH PREMIUMS

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas, according to the Department of National Defence, there are over 30,000 serving military personnel calling Ontario home; and

"Whereas, according to the most recent census data, there are more than 1.6 million senior citizens over the age of 65 living in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario plans on eliminating this illegitimate tax for all Ontarians after it forms the government in 2007; and

"Whereas, as an interim measure, the illegitimate health tax should be removed from those who protect Canada and those who have built Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, call on the government of Ontario to immediately eliminate the illegitimate health tax, beginning with serving military personnel and senior citizens."

I have also signed this.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition that has to do with access to trades and professions in Ontario. It's addressed to the Parliament of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise

their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

“Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent, arbitrary and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

“Whereas action by Ontario’s trades and professions could remove many such barriers, but Ontario’s trades and professions have failed to recognize that such structural barriers exist, much less to take action to remove them, and to provide fair, timely, transparent and cost-effective access to trades and professions for new Canadians trained outside Canada;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Ontario Legislative Assembly urge the members of all parties to swiftly pass Bill 124, the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006, and to require Ontario’s regulated professions and trades to review and modify their procedures and qualification requirements to swiftly meet the needs of Ontario’s employers, Ontario’s newcomers and their own membership, all of whom desperately need the very skills new Canadians bring working for their organizations, for their trades and professions, and for their families.”

Since I agree with this petition, I am delighted to sign it and send it over to you with page Or.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES ACT, 2006 (NO. 2)

LOI DE 2006 SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES (NO 2)

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 1, 2006, on the motion for second reading of Bill 151, An Act to enact various 2006 Budget measures and to enact, amend or repeal various Acts / Projet de loi 151, Loi édictant diverses mesures énoncées dans le Budget de 2006 et édictant, modifiant ou abrogeant diverses lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to the order of the House dated yesterday, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Sorbara has moved second reading of Bill 151, An Act to enact various 2006 Budget measures and to enact, amend or repeal various Acts.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1554 to 1604.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time.

Ayes

Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bradley, James J.
Broten, Laurel C.
Brownell, Jim
Bryant, Michael
Cansfield, Donna H.
Caplan, David
Colle, Mike
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Di Cocco, Caroline
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad

Duncan, Dwight
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Gerretsen, John
Hoy, Pat
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Marsales, Judy
Matthews, Deborah
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Mossop, Jennifer F.
Oraziotti, David

Parsons, Ernie
Patten, Richard
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Qaadri, Shafiq
Ramal, Khalil
Ramsay, David
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Smith, Monique
Smitherman, George
Sorbara, Gregory S.
Takhar, Harinder S.
Watson, Jim
Wilkinson, John
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time.

Nays

Barrett, Toby
Bisson, Gilles
Chudleigh, Ted
DiNovo, Cheri
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Hardeman, Ernie
Hudak, Tim
Klees, Frank

Kormos, Peter
MacLeod, Lisa
Marchese, Rosario
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill
O’Toole, John
Prue, Michael
Runciman, Robert W.

Scott, Laurie
Sterling, Norman W.
Tabuns, Peter
Tory, John
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakabuski, John

The Deputy Clerk (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 51; the nays are 25.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to the order of House dated November 14, 2006, the bill is ordered referred to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs.

PUBLIC SERVICE OF ONTARIO STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2006 LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT DES LOIS AYANT TRAIT À LA FONCTION PUBLIQUE DE L’ONTARIO

Mr. Phillips moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 158, An Act to revise legislation relating to the public service of Ontario by repealing the Public Service Act, enacting the Public Service of Ontario Act, 2006 and the Ontario Provincial Police Collective Bargaining Act, 2006 and making complementary amendments to various Acts and by amending various Acts in respect of the successor rights of certain public servants / Projet de loi 158, Loi visant à réviser des lois ayant trait à la fonction publique de l’Ontario en abrogeant la Loi sur la fonction publique, en édictant la Loi de 2006 sur la fonction publique de l’Ontario et la Loi de 2006 sur la négociation collective relative à la Police provinciale de l’Ontario, en apportant des modifications complémentaires à diverses lois et en modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne la succession aux qualités pour certains fonctionnaires.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the minister for his leadoff speech.

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): I should inform the House that I'll be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, Mr. Vic Dhillon, the MPP for Brampton West—Mississauga.

I'm pleased to begin debate for second reading of Bill 158, the Public Service of Ontario Statute Law Amendment Act. I think all three parties would agree that Ontario has been well served by a public service with an outstanding track record, and the Ontario public service has been recognized internationally many times. On November 2, we took an important step by introducing legislation that will bring even greater transparency and accountability to a public service already known, as I said earlier, for its professionalism and unfailing dedication in serving the people of this province. The current public service legislation has undergone only minor revisions over the past few decades, and really has not been significantly changed since its creation. The legislation we've introduced takes us, dare I say, into the 21st century and will serve as a foundation for a modern public service.

1610

The public service in Ontario is held in high esteem worldwide for its professionalism, its excellence and the dedication that it brings to serving the people of Ontario. However, we do believe it's important to reinforce our ability to meet public expectations for transparency, accountability and professionalism, while at the same time providing important safeguards and protections for our public servants should they need them. The legislation includes a new statement of purpose, which I frankly think is important. I think it will foster a greater common understanding of the role of this fundamental democratic institution that we call our public service. The legislation provides the tools to ensure that we achieve that purpose.

The legislation would, if passed, help ensure that the public service is effective in serving the public, the government and the Legislature. It will ensure that the public service in Ontario is accountable, ethical, non-partisan and professional. It will provide a clear framework for the administration, the leadership and the management of our public service of Ontario. It will clarify the rights and duties of public servants concerning ethical conduct. The legislation, if passed, will clarify conflict-of-interest rules for current and former public service employees. It will clarify the political rights and restrictions for all public servants. It will establish clear accountabilities for oversight. It will enhance our strong ethical and management framework for all public servants. It will deliver on our commitment to put whistle-blowing protection in place for all public servants and it will restore successor rights for Ontario government employees.

We've consulted extensively on the proposed legislation—with current and former ministry executives, with government agencies, with our bargaining partners and with members of all three parties here in the Legislature. I'm pleased to report that the feedback from the con-

sultations was positive and constructive. We had a lot of involvement, and I appreciate that.

Underpinning the important provisions I have referenced is the need for a strong administrative foundation for public service. This act, in my mind, sets the framework for how our public service manages the affairs of the public service. If passed, the legislation will strengthen human resource management and administration by establishing clear accountability, introducing modern language. As I mentioned earlier, the act has not been updated for some time. In my opinion, and I think you'll find this as you get into the bill, it establishes clear and modern language.

Responsibilities related to human resource matters will be clarified for the two prime responsibilities, Management Board of Cabinet and the Public Service Commission. The Public Service Commission will be given all human resource management authorities, with the power to delegate, and will have responsibility for approving government-wide—or enterprise-wide, to use the jargon—and also cluster-specific human resource policies. Cabinet will continue to be responsible for all fiscal decisions. Deputy ministers will be responsible for ministry staff, agency chairs will be responsible for staff in their agencies and ministers will be responsible for ministerial staff.

As I mentioned earlier, a key objective of this proposed legislation is to provide public servants with important safeguards and protections needed to do their job. Again, as I said in my first comments, I think we're fortunate in this province to have a very professional public service that, day in and day out, does a great job. But every once in a while there may be a need for someone to have whistle-blowing authority if something has gone wrong, to make sure that we have in place an appropriate mechanism so that they are allowed, without fear of reprisal, to bring that forward.

We are, in this legislation, providing our public servants with the ability, should the need arise, to disclose alleged serious wrongdoing without fear of reprisal. It would give an independent officer of the Legislature—the Integrity Commissioner—the authority to investigate and publicly report on serious allegations of wrongdoing, and it would improve upon legislative changes that were introduced in 1993 but actually never proclaimed. Not everybody perhaps realizes it, but in our existing Public Service Act, there were whistle-blowing provisions put in there in 1993 but never proclaimed. This will allow us to move forward with whistle-blowing. All employees and appointees of Ontario government ministries and agencies would be able to disclose a serious wrongdoing without fear or threat of reprisal. "Wrongdoing" includes contravention of a federal or provincial act or regulation; an act or omission that creates a grave danger to life, health, safety or the environment; gross mismanagement; or directing or counselling a person to commit a wrongdoing that falls into these categories.

The proposed disclosure process would be straightforward and would ensure that allegations of wrongdoing

are addressed in a timely manner. A public servant who wants to disclose a wrongdoing would be able to report the information to an internal officer designated by the Public Service Commission. The designate would have a responsibility to investigate and report his or her findings to the discloser. Importantly, if the discloser is not satisfied with the report back, he or she could take the matter to the Integrity Commissioner. Also, a public servant would have the option of making the disclosure directly to the Integrity Commissioner if he or she believes that an internal disclosure would be inappropriate. In the case of an emergency or an urgent matter, the Integrity Commissioner can deal with the matter quickly.

As I mentioned earlier, there are protections in here against reprisals. The proposed legislation would prohibit anyone from taking an action that negatively affects the employment or working conditions of an employee because he or she has disclosed a wrongdoing. Public servants would be entitled to make a complaint about a reprisal or a threat of reprisal to a grievance board and have the matter addressed. At a hearing on the complaint, the onus will be on the employer to demonstrate that no reprisal was taken. If a ruling finds the reprisal was taken, the person responsible for the reprisal would face disciplinary action, including being charged with an offence.

We consulted broadly on this piece of legislation and we've had, I think, good feedback on it. I will say that there was a debate on which officer of the Legislature would be appropriate, the Ombudsman or the Integrity Commissioner. We felt—and I've considered this carefully—that the appropriate officer is the Integrity Commissioner. I think there is a well-developed process which the Integrity Commissioner has. They are investigating serious allegations that require the kind of balanced process that our Integrity Commissioner deals with when they are dealing with integrity matters.

The Ombudsman is an option. The challenge that I felt was there is that often the Ombudsman's role is to, on behalf of the public, take public concerns about the service that's been provided by the public service and initiate action to correct it. I can see that if it was the Ombudsman who had responsibility here, there is the potential for conflict, where the whistle-blower is essentially looking to the Ombudsman for redress and the Ombudsman is kind of on one side of the issue. On balance, I believe the Integrity Commissioner is the appropriate model to be able to put in place the right process for dealing with the serious matters of whistle-blowing.

I know that it will be important that the Office of the Integrity Commissioner has the necessary resources to deal with it. That has to be a given. We have some experience with this in that, if you recall, when we introduced the Government Advertising Act, we provided the Auditor General with the responsibility for dealing with it. That was a brand new responsibility. The Auditor General at the time wanted assurance that they would have the resources for dealing with it, and we, the government, made sure that happened, in conjunction

with the Legislature, obviously, which makes that decision.

1620

I want to turn to political rights. It's vitally important that public servants, like all citizens, have the freedom to express their fundamental democratic right to participate in political activity. It's also important for public servants to be aware of their rights and obligations so that they can exercise their political activity rights while respecting the important non-partisan nature of our public service. I think the bill provides the appropriate balance for that. If passed, the legislation will bring greater clarity to the rules, whom they apply to, so public servants will know very clearly what they can and cannot do related to their own political involvement inside and outside of work. It will also balance the need to preserve a non-partisan, neutral public service with an individual's right to participate in political activity.

The proposed legislation maintains essentially the same rights and restrictions to political activity as the current Public Service Act. It also amends categories of public servants for the purpose of political activity and describes the rights and restrictions that apply to employees in these categories. It expands the rules to all government agencies so that all public servants are held to the same standards.

The next area I want to talk about is the conflict-of-interest provisions. The framework we are proposing for conflict of interest will reinforce the confidence that the public have that decisions are made with the interest of the province and the people of Ontario first and foremost. If passed, the legislation will reinforce the government's strong culture of ethics and clarify the lines of accountability for ministry staff, agency staff and staff in the minister's office. The proposed legislation provides regulation-making authority to the Lieutenant Governor in Council to establish conflict-of-interest rules for public servants and former public servants who either worked in a ministry or worked in a minister's office.

The proposed legislation would apply to agencies classified under the Management Board of Cabinet agency establishment and accountability directive. The act would create the role of an ethics executive. Every public servant would have someone to consult for advice and for direction. The heads of ministries and agencies would be accountable for their respective staff and responsible for ensuring in-service and post-service conflict-of-interest rules. The Integrity Commissioner would be the ethics executive for current and former staff and ministers' offices. Agencies will be permitted to create their own conflict-of-interest rules as long as those rules are consistent with standards required of ministries and approved by an independent conflict-of-interest commission, and to establish in-service and post-service rules.

It is our intent to put in regulation the current regulations in that, in my opinion, in the three years we've been in government and the previous years with the previous government, I think they have been working quite well.

I want to turn now to the Ontario Provincial Police Collective Bargaining Act and to welcome Karl Walsh, who is the president of the Ontario Provincial Police Association. As I've said publicly, he represents his members very well, very firmly, but as with the other leadership and the people who represent employees, always with an overarching concern, first and foremost, for serving the public well.

We are moving to further modernize our public service by giving clarity to how we bargain contracts with the Ontario Provincial Police. If passed, the legislation will move collective bargaining provisions, essentially unchanged, into a new stand-alone statute, the Ontario Provincial Police Collective Bargaining Act, and make it consistent with collective bargaining provisions for other public service bargaining units that are in statutes other than the Public Service Act. We've consulted broadly with the OPPA, and I'm pleased that they've indicated their support for this. As I say, it essentially ensures that our valued OPP have the same rights in statutes as our other collective bargaining agencies.

I'd like to talk now about successor rights. Virtually all unionized workers in Ontario in the private and public sector have successor rights, all except Ontario government employees. Again, I'd repeat that: All private sector and all public sector, except the Ontario government, employees have successor rights. Ontario has a public service that's second to none. It's only fair, in our opinion, that our public servants have the same successor rights as people working in the private sector. Under the new legislation, public sector employees will again have the same rights enjoyed by workers in the private sector. If passed, the legislation will restore balance and confidence to Ontario's labour relations regime and provide the same rights for our employees as private sector and broader public sector employees have.

If a government undertaking is transferred to, for example, a municipal government or a non-government organization, affected public servants would continue to keep their benefits and their rights under the existing collective agreement to the same extent as private sector employees in a sale situation.

Bill 158, which we're debating here, is a key component of the McGuinty government's effort to modernize our government. It builds on several other important initiatives: I talked earlier about the legislation dealing with advertising; the amendments to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act to include universities, Hydro One and Ontario Power Generation; the inclusion of the financial results of hospitals, school boards and colleges of applied arts and technology in the provincial budget; and the expanded authority for the Auditor General to carry out value-for-money audits of organizations receiving government funds to deliver front-line services.

This legislation would update and clarify responsibilities in many areas so that the fundamental principles of public service—accountability, competency, non-partisanship and professionalism—are clearly and firmly

identified and supported. That's why I'm calling on all members of this Legislature to support this legislation.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): Mr. Speaker, he will be sharing his time—

The Acting Speaker: I'm sorry. I apologize. I didn't see anyone standing up.

Hon. Mr. Phillips: I'm sharing my time.

The Acting Speaker: The parliamentary assistant, the member for Brampton West–Mississauga.

Mr. Vic Dhillon (Brampton West–Mississauga): It's an honour for me to speak today, with Minister Phillips, and lead off debate on this very important piece of legislation. Bill 158, the Public Service of Ontario Statute Law Amendment Act, demonstrates our government's commitment to the people who work in public service and to the people of this province.

As you may remember, it was our Premier who, in his inaugural address, brought attention to the paramount work done by public servants all over this province and the importance for government to work as a team with our public servants. It was our Premier who, when he was sworn in, personally wrote to Ontario public servants to acknowledge the professionalism and dedication they bring to their work and to encourage them to continue in their pursuit of excellence in public service. To this day, our commitment to the intrinsic value of public service remains unchanged, and that's what this new legislation is all about: demonstrating our commitment to the people who dedicate their careers to public service in Ontario and, ultimately, to the people of Ontario.

As you know, the Public Service Act, which was originally introduced in 1878, has not substantially changed in more than 100 years. This is, frankly, not the kind of legislation governments spend much time on, given the countless pressing issues that usually take up legislative agendas. Yet, with the global trend that has brought administrations into the 21st century, a thorough overhaul of the Public Service Act was long overdue.

In its 2005 budget paper, *Investing in People*, our government stated that it intended to update legislation governing the public service to embed the principles of accountability, transparency and delivery of results as the next step in modernizing government. Then, on February 2, 2006, Premier McGuinty publicly stated that, as part of the program to introduce more accountability into government, he had asked the secretary of the cabinet to review and make recommendations about potential amendments to the Public Service Act. Finally, the 2006 budget stated that consultations on a new Public Service Act were under way. This initiative, it said, seeks to embed in legislation the fundamental principles of public service—accountability, merit, non-partisanship and professionalism—and to provide a strong ethical framework for public servants.

1630

As you know, extensive consultations were held in preparation of the proposed legislation. Numerous parties

were invited to provide comments and input on proposed legislative changes. Much of that input is reflected in the proposed legislation.

Stakeholders were provided with a first consultation paper outlining topics for discussion at the beginning of March 2006. In-person consultations led by the public service legislation project, Ministry of Government Services, took place during March, April and May 2006.

The second consultation paper was distributed to the stakeholders at the end of June. Stakeholders included bargaining agencies, which includes tribunals, advisory bodies and statutory corporations, government ministries, various public service councils and selected academics, former senior public servants and other experts.

We're modernizing public service legislation to help ensure that the public service continues to be accountable, ethical, non-partisan and professional, while providing the safeguards and protection that public servants need to carry out their functions.

Whistle-blower protection has sat on the books for more than 10 years, unproclaimed by previous governments. Our government is delivering on its commitment to put whistle-blower protection in place for all public servants. The provisions introduced in 1993 were based on best practices at the time and do not meet today's standards for transparency and accountability. The proposed legislation is much stronger, in that it establishes a more modern and effective framework for disclosure, with clear procedures and accountabilities.

For example, the current unproclaimed provisions do not provide the power for independent investigations of allegations of serious wrongdoing. The proposed legislation gives power and authority to an independent officer of the Legislature, the Integrity Commissioner, to investigate and publicly report on allegations of wrongdoing. Public servants would also have the option of making a disclosure directly to the Integrity Commissioner if they believe that internal disclosure would be inappropriate.

In addition, the proposed legislation would prohibit anyone from taking an action that negatively affects the employment or working conditions of an employee because he or she has disclosed a wrongdoing. Public servants would be entitled to make a complaint about a reprisal or threat of reprisal to a grievance board and have the matter addressed. At a hearing on the complaint, the onus would be on the employer to demonstrate that no reprisal was taken. If a ruling finds that a reprisal was taken, the person responsible for the reprisal would face disciplinary actions and could be charged with an offence.

Bill 158 also addresses political activity rights and restrictions for all servants. For instance, there's a need—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale-High Park): On a point of order, Ms. Speaker: Call for a quorum.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Is there a quorum present?

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table: A quorum is now present.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Brampton has the floor.

Mr. Dhillon: Bill 158 also addresses political activity rights and restrictions for all public servants. For instance, there's a need to ensure that restrictions on political activity are applied in a fair and justifiable manner.

In addition, we have to ensure that as this complex organization changes over time, we have the flexibility to identify classes of positions that warrant higher restrictions, which we cannot do right now.

Under the proposed legislation, specific categories would clearly set out what public servants can and cannot do. Flexibility to add staff to the specially restricted group, if necessary, would enable us to support and respect the objectives of a non-partisan public service.

The proposed legislation also contains conflict-of-interest provisions. The intent of these provisions would be to enhance the ethical framework of the public service. Currently, there's a need to ensure that the same principles and rules apply consistently across the public service. For instance, current rules do not apply to all 350 agencies or to agency appointees. This legislation would give agencies the ability to establish their own rules, subject to approval by the conflict of interest commissioner. The commissioner would ensure that agency rules are consistent with or more stringent than public service standards.

The proposed legislation would also make clear that ministers, deputy ministers and agency chairs or another senior official in the agency are responsible for the promotion of ethical conduct in their offices and for ensuring their staff are familiar with the conflict-of-interest rules that apply to them.

This new legislation is very much part of our government's efforts to modernize its operations and restore fairness and balance to labour relations in Ontario. In fact, one of the cornerstones of this legislation is to restore successor rights for Ontario government employees, a public commitment that the Premier made. As you know, successor rights had been removed under the previous government, which means that without successor rights, when a government function was transferred—for example, to a municipal government or a non-governmental organization—the affected employees were no longer represented by their union and their collective bargaining rights ended. If the employees wished to keep the union, the union would have had to seek again to represent the bargaining unit and attempt to negotiate a first contract with the new employer.

Under the new legislation, if a government undertaking is transferred, the affected employees would continue to have collective bargaining rights and be represented by the same bargaining agent. That's why restoring successor rights for crown employees and giving public servants the same rights enjoyed by private sector and broader public sector employees is the right thing to do.

This proposed legislation is an expression of what public service stands for: accountability, non-partisanship, competency and professionalism. Its intention is to support and maintain a high standard of integrity for public servants while providing important protections that public servants need to deliver high-quality services to Ontario.

For this reason, I call on all members to support this important legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I am looking forward, in a few moments, to speaking on this bill. It is rather a large bill. As I said before, it's a bill that for the most part—I think just dealing with one of the issues, a substantive issue is the whistle-blower protection. Certainly as a government under John Tory, we'd be supportive of protecting persons. Mr. Cutler from Ottawa, who ran as a candidate for Stephen Harper federally, was the premier whistle-blower in Ottawa when he blew the whistle on the Liberals' shenanigans around the ad scam. So, there's the contradiction when you're dealing with a government that's closing the door, you might say, after the horse has been out, running around. Certainly federally, that's the record of the Liberal government.

1640

I don't want to cast aspersions on the current government because that part of it—clearly our critic Joe Tascona made it in his responding remarks on first reading to state that we'd be supportive of that particular section of the bill. Clearly, there's a wish here to make sure that we go out for hearings on this bill. This is just the start of the second reading, so I've taken some deliberate notes while Minister Phillips was speaking and I'll try to respond to those in a general sense because I'm not the critic, on a very technical bill—142 pages. There are a number of schedules in this bill as well, so it's worth pondering.

I do have some questions on—I would say, hoping that Minister Phillips responds; I have a lot of respect for his work—section 146 and the Integrity Commissioner's role versus the Ombudsman's role. I'm kind of drawn into it a bit. I'd like to expand on that, on the Integrity Commissioner's most recent ruling on sub judice, but I'll leave that to Minister Phillips's response.

Ms. DiNovo: I'm delighted to speak the first volley on this bill. I guess I'm well suited to speak about ethics, coming from the other side of the House. I remember a certain by-election campaign where a smear campaign was let loose upon myself. It was traced back to the very office of this minister, Mr. Phillips, where an aide was reprimanded over it. So yes, it's about time that this government brought in a bill dealing with ethics. It's a little bit like the fox talking about ethics in the henhouse. We would love to see whistle-blower protection. We would love to see successor rights. We would, in the New Democratic Party, of course, and we proposed this—it took them three years to bring this in. In a sense, I wish that this bill had been in place during that by-

election. Perhaps I would have had some protection and perhaps other people would have some protection when government employees engaged in that kind of smear campaign while sitting at their desks in this very House. Perhaps you would have some chance, then, to challenge that. Perhaps they would have some chance to challenge that.

Of course, like all Liberal bills, it lacks teeth. So we would like to, in the New Democratic Party, give it some teeth. We would like to talk about the fact that there are no funding guarantees here. I'd also be very interested in talking about the role of the Ombudsman versus the Integrity Commissioner and how those two roles might be devised and who should really be enacting this, where should the final accountability lie. We have an excellent Ombudsman, and one would query why the Ombudsman wouldn't be the last person of recourse to whom a complaint might go. So I look forward to speaking about that and speaking about all things. Of course, as always, we support collective bargaining rights and we support the rights of those in collective bargaining units, including the OPP and OPSEU.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I'm pleased to have an opportunity to say a few words about the bill today, Bill 158. What's important about this bill, An Act to revise legislation relating to the public service of Ontario, and it does repealing of other acts and makes other amendments to various public service acts—the key to this is that our government is committed to respecting the values of the public service and what they bring to government. This legislation helps to ensure that the public service will continue to be accountable, ethical, non-partisan and professional, as the minister and the parliamentary assistant indicated earlier.

What I like about this bill especially is that we have consulted extensively with bargaining agents, current and former ministry executives, government agencies and members of all parties, and the feedback was positive and constructive. In looking at this bill and in just researching a little bit, what I find interesting is that this bill has not been significantly changed since it was first created. I think that was back in, if I'm not mistaken, 1878. So it is high time to make these changes and to bring this into the 21st century.

The whistle-blowing provisions: The other members have spoken about the importance of that and providing protection to public servants, and even the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition, who said, "One government after another didn't do it. I think it is high time that it is being done and I'm glad that they're doing it." That was in the Toronto Star on Friday, November 3.

Previous governments didn't do it. They failed to proclaim it. I'm glad to see this go forward. I'm in support.

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): I would like to come back to the importance of whistle-blower legislation. I think that in the complex form of government we have today, where you have thousands of people who make up the public service, this is an important piece of security for individuals. I know that certainly stories and

things like that come back to people such as I, as an MPP. Obviously, they're not substantiated; you can't do anything about them. It seems to me, though, that it speaks to the frustration that individuals may have, feeling that there isn't an avenue for being able to speak up.

I'm not familiar with the details of the previous piece of legislation, although I too was rather surprised that it would go through the whole legislative process. You would think that if there was something wrong with it, that would have been exposed much earlier instead of simply never proclaiming it. I'm sure that the minister will enlighten us as to the changes that are proposed in this piece of legislation that would find support.

Federally, we know that the work of the whistle-blower in what led to the Gomery inquiry and things like that demonstrates the importance of being able to have legislation that would safeguard those who uncover something that, frankly, needs to be uncovered.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Hon. Mr. Phillips: I'm responding to the questions and comments, Mr. Speaker. I believe we've had four, and—

The Deputy Speaker: Sorry. I've just arrived in the chair, and I'm trying to catch up.

Minister, the floor is yours.

Hon. Mr. Phillips: I want to thank the members for Durham, Parkdale-High Park, Scarborough Southwest and York North.

I think all four commented on whistle-blowing. I just want to say that my experience with the public service is that it's an overwhelming group of people who do good work. You go out in your community and you're at some volunteer group: "Where do you work?" "I work for the Ontario public service." That's what makes up the overwhelming majority of our 65,000 people. I'm always conscious, when we're talking about conflict and whistle-blowing and whatnot, to not let that cloud the overwhelming good work that they all do.

On whistle-blowing, the member for York North asked, "Why wasn't it proclaimed?" Let me say to you, if you examine it, this is a stronger piece of whistle-blowing than what's in the current legislation. The current legislation was passed by the NDP, actually, in 1993 and never proclaimed. Then it sat for, dare I say, eight years with the previous government, not proclaimed. I'm not sure why they didn't do that. But if you look at it, it was not an officer of the Legislature who was due to deal with this, and there wasn't the authority to investigate wrongdoing, which we're providing in our bill. I would argue, if you do the research of the two, that we've substantially strengthened whistle-blowing.

It's for those rare cases where there is significant wrongdoing, as I said earlier. If you look at it, it's for violating acts, it's for gross mismanagement, it's for where you're putting someone's health or the environment at risk. I'm actually quite proud of the whistle-blowing proposal here. I think it's very workable, it en-

sures that people can come forward directly to the Integrity Commissioner, if they will, and it protects against reprisals. I look forward to debate now, and I'll be listening carefully.

1650

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. O'Toole: First, it's my privilege to seek unanimous consent, as our critic is absent today, to stand down his opening.

Hon. Mr. Phillips: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: The member has asked that the opposition leadoff be stood down, and it is agreed.

Further debate?

Mr. O'Toole: As much as I'd like to have had the hour myself, Mr. Tascona will, I'm sure, bring more substance to the discussion than I.

I want to start by saying that over the years, the few times I have been here, I have watched and listened to the work that Mr. Phillips has done, and in fact he's a fair-minded person. I would start with that understanding right from the beginning. I listened to his remarks, and he did bring up a few things. It's kind of a technical bill. Some of it is kind of payback and some of it is trying to fix things in a more open and transparent way, and that we would be supportive of.

That's where you get to the, I guess, interpretation. That's why public hearings are so important, to clarify the roles of certain officers of the Legislature, one of them being the Integrity Commissioner. You then run into the more assertive role of the current Ombudsman. He's taking an interest in the children's aid society and other issues—a very progressive individual who interprets his role as an officer of the Legislature in a certain way. There's some independence in that role too as the Ombudsman. But I also look at the auditor for the province of Ontario, a person I have a lot of respect for, and his predecessor, Erik Peters, as well made great comment.

There's a case where the auditors, if you really want to draw it to a case, independently and with the integrity of their profession, as well as their duties and responsibilities as defined under their relationship with the government as officers of the Legislature, go about dutifully auditing these various procedures and the compliance thereof with the legislative regulations etc. and point out whether it's in energy or whether it's in transportation or whether it's in a myriad of areas where they comment annually, and bring it to the attention of the government, and the government quite often doesn't follow through. This is where you wonder how futile this whole process might end up being when you have the whistle-blower provisions going to a poorly resourced area such as the Integrity Commissioner's.

Just recently the Integrity Commissioner has ruled on a couple of things. One he ruled on was the pay scale, and I'm going to stand down my remarks for a few minutes because the minister—only kidding. I'd like him to hear because he'll probably give me some wise advice. The Integrity Commissioner did just recently make a

declaration. Let's go down sequentially here. The Integrity Commissioner, Mr. Coulter Osborne, a revered former member of the bench and the courts, first of all said that—I'll be quite frank—the MPPs should be paid a certain amount on their remuneration etc. Independently he consulted and made his recommendations. He just ignored whether the Conservatives or the Liberals, or for that matter the NDP, disagreed with his findings. Independently it wasn't going to ingratiate him in any way by saying that they should be paid appropriately or whatever, and a comparator group. He even made that recommendation.

Even some time after that, they talked about the issue of members of provincial Parliament's mileage entitlement. We get 34 cents a kilometre or something. I think the issue came up because our pay today is \$88,000, I think, something like that, and there is no pension or anything like that. So there were some things that were being looked at, and the Integrity Commissioner, as an independent officer of the court, has made these kinds of observations. Has the government listened? That's the point I'm making here. The answer to that is that no, they haven't.

The more recent ruling of the Integrity Commissioner is something that Mr. Runciman, our member from—I'll look up his riding, and I should know that because he's our House leader—Leeds—Grenville, has taken issue with it. That's the Integrity Commissioner's recent ruling on the sub judice convention, and that is the role of the MPP and their privileges, within the Legislature or outside the Legislature, commenting on issues that are of a legal nature. I hope that clarifies what that is. What Mr. Runciman is saying—he takes exception to this and wants a clarification. I think the Speaker or somebody will rule on it. I'm not sure who's going to rule on it, actually; it will probably be the Speaker. Claude DesRosiers is not the Clerk anymore, so it could be other members of the table staff; I'm not sure. But Mr. Runciman said to me that now the general public has more freedom to comment than the MPP does. We are elected and we should be accountable for questions and comments with respect to issues before the courts or legal interpretation of issues, but I think we also have a right, but also the responsibility, to be appropriately observant of what the rules of procedure are. It says we're going to be the only jurisdiction in the world with this restriction on our ability to comment.

This all ties in under the whistle-blower provisions here in the Legislature, as I will be referring to them, and that section under the whistle-blower—as I said, I want to maybe regroup and reformat my comments here. That, to me, is the best place to start, because under this particular bill, there are two things: the section dealing with the whistle-blowers, dealt with around section 140 in the bill. The other section of the bill—let me review it here for the members. There are four separate sections to the bill that I've seen—again, I'm not the critic, so I just have very brief notes on it—one being the whistle-blower issue, and the second being the re-enactment of the Ontario police bargaining agent act. There are some

subsections of that. There's schedule C, to accommodate amendments that must be made to other acts as a result of the new Public Service of Ontario Act. Schedule D deals exclusively with amendments related to reinstating the successor rights provisions from the public service, removed in 1995.

So as you can see, a lot of it is something that the general public listening today may not—these comments in the Legislature today are to draw on those stakeholders, both in the public sector and indeed the private sector, to make sure that all Ontarians are treated equally. I think everyone would agree with that. I don't see a difference there at all. I would say that as I continue on the whistle-blower part—some comments have been made. It is probably the area—you wonder why the NDP legislation on whistle-blower protection in 1993 was never proclaimed. You have to ask yourself why. One of the most obvious questions would be, what's the mechanism for managing those complaints—validating them, first of all? Somebody is upset with the boss etc. So if you look into the regulation section of the bill, you'll see that it is quite prescriptive. It is my understanding that it will be quite prescriptive in what constitutes protection under the whistle-blower provisions. Those are substantive reasons that you want to have public hearings on such an important and necessary change.

As we all know, the recent Gomery inquiry in Ottawa is a perfect example of the individual who blew the whistle on the federal Liberal government—I don't want to confuse it with the Dalton McGuinty Liberals; they've only had three years, so they haven't started to fatten the calf just yet. But the issue here, quite frankly, is that the Gomery inquiry spent millions of dollars, published litanies of commentaries from different legal and ethical people, and the poor fellow who blew the whistle was not protected. That is simply wrong. His name was—the whistle-blower fellow in Ottawa.

Mrs. Munro: Allan Cutler.

1700

Mr. O'Toole: Allan Cutler; you're right. I should know that, and I had said it earlier. It just temporarily slipped my mind. Allan is the person who should have been protected.

This is where you get down into the bill itself. You need to define a process. Now, it should be noted that in section 146 they actually are assigning this new, important responsibility to the Integrity Commissioner. The Integrity Commissioner's office is up on Bloor Street. I think there are three or four people who work there. One kind of looks after the security systems, another person kind of runs the office, and the other person is the Integrity Commissioner himself. There are very few people working there, let's put it that way. How are they going to deal with this very important and new priority that has been given to them without the resources?

Yet, if you look clearly, there are other existing officers of the Legislature who do have resources, one being the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is supposed to be the problem solver, at least for things that are not

before the courts. They are not able to deal with things that are being dealt with by some dispute resolution mechanism, i.e., the courts. The other one, as I commented earlier, is the Auditor General, Mr. McCarter. The annual report is there, from all these officers. Give them a few more staff to comment on what constitutes a violation under this new whistle-blower provision. So we do need hearings on that particular section for sure.

But do you really need that? If I really draw this thing into the currency of today, today our leader, John Tory, and Bob Runciman had a great meeting with the media and the people of Ontario right over here on Bay Street. They launched a campaign, a campaign to stop government waste. It should not just be a privilege, it should be a duty to stop government waste. This isn't like General Motors or Stelco; this is public money. Every single cent and every single dollar that's spent or taken in, whether it's the health tax or whether it's waste in spending, is taxpayers' money—hard-working families, right out of the jeans of Mr. or Mrs. Working Person in Ontario. So there's an inherent necessity for accountability and transparency here.

If people want to speak to me directly or to John Tory directly, I'm going to give you a place to go. We're not going to create a new bureaucracy. We're going to say www.wastebusters.ca. The conception here is that we've got a crack group of people who are going to follow up on these complaints, and we're going to bring them to this Legislature and ask Mr. McGuinty for an explanation.

Just one example that came to my attention recently: An individual in Ontario received a cheque in the mail for 30 cents; I think it was from Hydro One—30 cents. Do you know how much it would have cost to produce that cheque? The stamp alone on the cheque would have been worth probably a dollar or close to it; the envelope, the computer—that's just one example.

Interjection.

Mr. O'Toole: One of the members on the other side is asking for more examples. These are just ones that I'm aware of. Mr. Tory commented today, and I think this tells the story in itself. To the viewers of Ontario, imagine this: We don't need to have whistle-blowers; we need the people of Ontario to watch this government that would say anything to get elected. Now, \$559,000 was spent creating a partisan TV ad on education; half a million dollars was spent for one of their fundraising teams to create a partisan ad on education. That would have been enough money to hire a couple of teachers or teaching assistants or special ed people or to help some of those autistic families in Ontario. That's what's missing here. That's what's missing.

The consultant fees for the Ministry of Education—this is another one. I know they're trying to improve education. That's something that has been worked on. David Cooke, when he was the Minister of Education for the NDP, tried to improve education. So there's a lot of work that remains to be done..

The spending on consultants in the Ministry of Education alone—this is frightening—has gone up 1,277%.

Imagine the amount of money that could have gone towards children with special needs or English as a second language. In the Ministry of Education, \$1.2 million was spent on hotel rooms—\$1.2 million—and they've only been in for three years. Man, when you start looking at wastebusters.ca, let us know what you know, and we will not necessarily need to enact this portion of the—

Interjection.

Mr. O'Toole: One of the ones you need to be aware of—the government will say anything or promise anything to get elected, get your vote or just to convince you at the door; it's "Yes" to everything. On Highway 407, they promised during the election that they were going to roll back the tolls. They've spent millions of dollars in court. Ask yourself: Are the tolls any lower?

Another one—these are just ones without any script here that are so obvious.

Autism: They promised, in a letter from Dalton McGuinty with his signature on it, that they were going to help those parents. Have they helped you? They've spent millions fighting you in court.

I think the list could go on. In fact, I have a few more points, and some of the members keep encouraging me to bring these points to your attention, so I may just do that. I think that would be important, that we let people know that we support the whistle-blower provision in the bill because we know there will be things found, and these things that are found should be brought to the attention of the public and solved.

But how do you create relevancy for this issue? Just over the past week, all members of the Legislature—in the brief time I have—met with members of the long-term-care community. This is a bill that's before the Legislature, Bill 140. The bill, quite frankly, in one line says it does this: It eliminates a number of beds, the B- and C-type facilities, and has no provision creating new beds in it for long-term-care patients. This is an aging population. We know from the baby boom issue and the demographics that we need more of them, not fewer of them. That bill doesn't fulfill any commitment they made during the election.

If you want a whistle-blower, take some of their election promises and let's just have a scorecard of how they're doing. That doesn't take a great bureaucracy. Let's say, "This is what they promised; this is what they did." I think that's fair. I think that's fair to anyone.

I want to put on the record—because we don't get the time sometimes to extend our congratulations to the members of municipal government who are going to be working with us as partners over the next three or four years. I know many of them, and I have the greatest respect for them. First of all, Gerri Lynn O'Connor, who's the outgoing mayor of Uxbridge and has been serving the public for about 30 years in a variety of forms in elected office, has been replaced by Mayor Bob Shepherd. The regional councillor is Howie Herrema. His father was a regional chair of Durham region—a wonderful family.

Ward 1 is Bev Northeast. Ward 2 is Ted Eng—a great agricultural leader, former leader of the Durham Region Federation of Agriculture. Ward 3 is Pat Mikuse. Ward 4 is Jack Ballinger. Ward 5 is Gordon Highet.

In the boards of education, Joe Allin in the public board and Kathy LeFort in the separate board, round out those people representing that area.

Congratulations to each of them, and thank you to those who didn't succeed in their bid for office but did let their names stand, because that's true accountability.

I also want to go to Scugog, where we have Marilyn Pearce returning. We have Jim McMillen, who's a regional councillor. Cecil Lamrock is new; Bobbie Drew, Lynn Philip Hodgson, Blair Martyn and Georgia Brock. Most of them were re-elected or acclaimed.

Congratulations also to a brand new mayor in Clarington, Mayor-Elect Jim Abernethy. Mary Novak is returning as a regional councillor, Charlie Trim is a regional councillor, Gord Robinson, Adrian Foster, Ron Hooper and Willy Woo; and the school trustees in Clarington are Steve Cooke, who's a new member, and Cathy Abraham. In the separate board are Maureen Day and Granville Anderson. I forgot to mention the school trustees in the north part of Durham, which would be Steve Martin and Kathy LeFort, who is representing Scugog as well as Uxbridge.

I would say that the public sector should be held accountable, but this bill only goes partway.

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The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms. DiNovo: I thought I would take just a couple of minutes to walk through a bit of the history of the bill. As Mr. Phillips said, yes, it's true that the NDP government first passed this legislation in 1993, and that included whistle-blower protection as part IV of the Ontario Public Service Act. Unfortunately, they didn't have time during their mandate to actually pass that bill into law. Ironically, yes, in 2000, Dalton McGuinty, then-Leader of the Opposition, called on the government to take the law off the shelf and proclaim it. Now we are three very long years later and finally it's coming to the floor. So we applaud, of course, as I said before, the fact that there are whistle-blower and successor rights.

I just wanted to walk through a little bit of what my colleague Mr. O'Toole was speaking about: the ad scam and whistle-blowing and why this whistle-blowing protection is so absolutely essential. This was the ad scam controversy. Allan Cutler—he was federal, of course—was a procurement officer with the public works department and he refused to go along with improper procurement practices and, as a result, suffered retaliation from management over the course of many years without any protection. He lodged a complaint, which prompted a department audit of the advertising and public opinion division, but by the time the audit was underway, Cutler was transferred to the technical and special services division of public works.

During the sponsorship scandal investigations, Cutler, we remember, tabled an inch-thick document which

contained meticulous notes, memos and his own diary detailing all the ways in which those rules were broken. The subsequent reality was, of course, what we know is the Gomery inquiry, and he was eventually vindicated. So it's a very classic example of why we need whistle-blower protection and, of course, why we need successor rights. I look forward to talking about those, because remember what our brothers and sisters in OPSEU went through; it cost thousands of OPSEU members their jobs in the last regime. I'll speak more about that later.

Hon. Mr. Phillips: A comment on the member for Durham's comments, just on the whistle-blowing part, because he spent a fair bit of time on it. I just want to acknowledge someone called Gary Gannage. Gary is the president of our second-largest bargaining agent. It's called AMAPCEO and it's a lot of our management people. What he said about it is, "We believe the Ontario whistle-blower legislation, if enacted, will be the strongest in Canada and will serve as an effective accountability mechanism for the citizens of this province."

I want to commend Gary Gannage. I talked to him probably a day after I became the minister. The first thing I think he told me about was, "We've got to find a way to move forward on whistle-blowing." He, on behalf of his organization, has been deeply involved in this. Just for the Legislature and the public, I would say that a big part of their concern is around reprisals and making sure that people feel comfortable. Built into the legislation, we'll find as we get into the debate, are some real protections on reprisals, ensuring that, as I said in my remarks, that it is up to the employer, not the employee, to demonstrate that they haven't taken a reprisal rather than the employee proving they had taken a reprisal, if you follow my logic. If it's proven that there were reprisals, it can be an offence.

I just wanted to reassure the public who are watching this that I think the needs for whistle-blowing will be, I hope, few and far between; but, if need be, it's there. The union that has put this as a high priority call it the strongest whistle-blowing legislation in Canada.

The member for High Park said that they only had two years to proclaim it and couldn't find the time to proclaim it, and I appreciate that. It does take a few hours to get things proclaimed, and it's unfortunate it couldn't be done.

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): I want to take this chance, before I comment on the member who was speaking a few minutes ago, to send congratulations to all the people who got elected in the city of London, from the mayor, to the board of control, to the city councillors. It's a rewarding job, and it's a privilege to get the job of serving the people of Ontario and serving the people of the city of London.

I was listening to a number of people speaking before me about the very important piece of legislation before us here. It's important to establish some kind of mechanism to protect the people of Ontario and also to protect the civil servants who serve the people of Ontario. I want to commend the minister for bringing this issue forward.

Hopefully, he'll get support from all members of the House, because it's about time.

As the leader of the opposition, John Tory, said to the *Toronto Star*, it's about time some government, some leadership, took the initiative and did it, because it's important to the people of Ontario to have a civil service accountable for the job, not using authority according to ethnic background or religion or political affiliation or any other position, just their position to serve the people of Ontario and to protect the civil servants who give their skills, talent, education and time to serve the people of Ontario. This will create balance.

The member was talking a few minutes ago about accountability. We now have an accountable government. We have a government that looks after the people of Ontario, but the minister thinks carefully before he moves in order to protect the public service. It's about time; that's why I'm supporting this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

There being no further questions and comment, the member for Durham has two minutes to respond.

Mr. O'Toole: I appreciate all the members who commented. I just want to put on the record, Minister, I appreciate your listening and responding.

I'm just going to get a couple more lists that are important, on the need for the public to keep a close eye on this thing. Just think of the last month. On November 1, we had an opposition day to draw to people's attention an on-going concern, an undercurrent of concern, the \$6 million they spent to remove the C from the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Commission. They just took the C off the end—\$6 million.

There was \$219,000 spent, that we know of, to redesign the Ontario trillium that has served this province for years and decades; \$20 million to quietly give raises to specific appointees to government agencies and boards; \$2 million in inaccurate partisan advertising about health care and how to improve it—call your doctor; \$91 million to fire nurses; \$90 million to close or consolidate community care access centers; \$16 million for Dalton McGuinty's "I won't raise your taxes" Liberal ad agency; \$2 million for the new local health integrated network offices, the LHINs; and \$55 million, so far, on Caledonia. The list goes on. Dial in now: www.whistleblower.ca.

There's more to be done on this bill. It's just the start of building true accountability into the public service as well as to the publicly elected persons who serve you in the province of Ontario.

I know that the successor rights issue will come up. But I think it's important to quote—Mr. Phillips did have a quote; I have one as well from the public service. The public service employee he mentioned said that they were happy that they honoured the agreement to bring in the successor, because it would ensure security in the public service. I have no problem with that, as that is a right that's negotiated, and that's the government's role, to negotiate—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): I want to say that you don't know how much I was looking forward to speaking on this very legislation.

Mr. O'Toole: How much? Tell us.

Mr. Bisson: I've been looking forward to it for about five minutes.

I want to put a couple of comments on the record. I appreciate that the minister is here in order to hear our comments. That is appreciated, because hopefully some of our comments will be taken into effect once we actually get into the legislation, as far as making any amendments that may happen, or may not happen, when we get to second reading.

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I just want to say that we generally agree with the direction you're going in with the bill. I think we all recognize that there are a number of key things we need to deal with in this bill, one of them being the whole issue of whistle-blower protection. As in any democracy, there are examples in all levels of government across this country—municipal, provincial or federal—where people may have done something wrong or decisions were not made in good faith, and we need to make sure that we give civil servants the opportunity to be protected and to feel they are protected in the event that wrongdoing is happening.

Imagine, for example, what happened in the whole « commandite » scandal—how do you say « commandite » in English?—the sponsorship scandal. There's a prime example, and probably the worst example, of how government can go awry. I think it would have been helpful in that case to have whistle-blower protection for the civil servants who may have seen what was going on. Certainly there had to be people within the federal civil service who were writing the cheques, who saw the applications coming in, who saw the information, who may have suspected what was going on but were basically worried about saying something because at the end of the day they all understand that they work for a deputy minister or a particular manager of a branch, and if they do go out and say something or make public information about what has happened, they may get themselves in trouble.

But there's also another reason. Civil servants are professionals. They understand their role. The role of the civil servant is to carry out the decisions of government. Governments may come and governments may go, but the civil service will normally remain, and the civil service is there to serve the decisions that a government makes.

For example, here in Ontario there were 40 long, dark years of Conservative government, and the civil service got used to a certain way of doing things. Then, over a period of 10 or 15 years, successive governments—a New Democratic government, a Conservative government and now a Liberal government—came into power that did things differently than the former—

Interruption.

Mr. Bisson: Somebody forgot to turn off their cellphone. There we go. Ah, he's been pointed out, and the Sergeant at Arms is running across as we speak.

Anyway, I was just saying that that is a good example of a professional civil service. They were there, they were used to doing things in a certain way for those 40 long, dark years of Conservative government, and when new governments were elected—first Mr. Peterson, then Mr. Rae, then Mr. Harris and now back to the Liberals under Mr. McGuinty—they were able to adjust how they do things and recognize that while they may have certain political leanings and certain philosophies, that is not their job. Their job is not to second-guess the government's decision but to carry it out. But there's a fine line, and it is a line we have to be mindful of and deal with in the legislation.

By the way, Mr. Speaker, may I say that we are standing down our lead? I thought that was already agreed to. Unanimous consent that we stand down our lead?

The Deputy Speaker: That had not been requested, but we can back up a little bit here. It is agreed that the lead will be stood down, and we'll fix the clock.

Mr. Bisson: the people are professional civil servants, and they know how to run the clock on the table, Speaker.

So the fine line becomes the professional civil service being able to do their jobs, and they may have a certain philosophy, but there's a fine line as to where they see wrongdoing. It's one thing for a civil servant to disagree with a government's decision. A good example of that is what happened during the Tory years under Mike Harris. I'm sure there were many civil servants who were aghast at some of the decisions that government made, but they had a professional responsibility to carry out the decisions of that government. And so long as those decisions and those actions they were carrying out as civil servants were within the law, they had an obligation to follow the direction of the government, and do so professionally.

But what happens when a civil servant sees something that is outside the law or something that is suspect? That's also one of the reasons we have civil servants. They're there to keep an eye on that and to have the ability to raise that issue, firstly with their supervisor and their manager up the chain, but if nothing happens, to find other ways to get other people on the outside to know about it so that the alarm bell can be rung and we can actually investigate to find out if there's wrongdoing.

After all, this is not our money. How many billions of dollars are there in our provincial budget? Somewhere around \$87 billion? The \$87 billion we have in our provincial budget isn't the property of the government of Ontario; it's the property of the people of Ontario. We're only charged as legislators and as parties for about a four-year term to deal with how we appropriate the dollars within those taxes we collect, which is the budget of Ontario. So we need to make sure that the taxpayer is well served in how those monies are utilized, making sure that no abuses are going on. That is one of the principles that most of us in this Legislature, I would

hope, would support. It's certainly something we supported when we were in government and took a number of steps to deal with in order to give civil servants some ability to scrutinize the actions of the government within the confines of their responsibilities as civil servants.

I say again, it's really a fine line, because civil servants are in a bit of a tough position sometimes. As I said, they have to carry out the wishes of a government they may not agree with and can't work against, because they're charged in their responsibilities as an employee to follow that out, but we need to give them the right to say, "Okay, this crosses the line, and we need somebody else to take a look at it." One of the mechanisms to do that is to create an office of complaints—that's part of what we're talking about in this legislation; I forget what we're calling it—so that some of these issues can be raised internally, first of all, with their own ministry supervisors and up the chain of command in the ministry, but that they have some bureau they can go to without having to run to the Toronto Sun, the Toronto Star or wherever it might be to ring the alarm bells.

I think this is why, for example, we have the Office of the Ombudsman. Mr. Marin, who is our Ombudsman now, has been exemplary in his work, which is to look at government decisions and policies and how they're applied to try to ascertain if the government is living within the confines of the intent of the law they would have passed. I think we would all agree that we've seen our Ombudsman do some very good work in looking at the shortcomings of public policy in this province, policies created by either New Democrats, Conservatives or Liberals, and giving the public an opportunity to bring complaints when policy is wrong.

We need to give civil servants that same kind of right. That's how I equate it. You need an ombudsman within the government to allow civil servants to raise those issues in some way so that there is a mechanism by which we can investigate possible wrongdoings. I'll go back to the Gomery affair, the « commandite »—what was that called again?

Interjection.

Mr. Bisson: The sponsorship scandal. I can never think of the term in English. Don't ask me why. It comes from watching the French newscast for so long and talking about « commandite ».

I think it's the worst example of the excesses that can happen in government, but it's also the best example of how an office of complaint or an ombudsman within government could have been there in the event that staffers or civil servants within those ministries affected felt their concerns were not being taken seriously. They could have gone to the office of an internal ombudsman of some type to deal with lodging a complaint, knowing that somebody who's neutral and has some authority would go back and investigate those complaints. We support that concept, and we look forward to work on committee that will allow us to look at that issue a little bit more closely and to see if this legislation of some 100-odd pages actually achieves what we want in the end.

I'm going to talk to that point in a second, but I also want to get to the other issue in this bill, which is one of extending political rights to public servants. There was a time in this province where we restricted pretty well all civil servants from being involved in the political process. I always felt at the time—this is before my time in politics, and I still feel like this today—that that was wrong. I understand there are certain people we have to have restrictions on because of the very nature of the job they do, and I think arguments could be made for some of them. For example, I certainly don't think you want the deputy minister of a department running out and being the champion of whatever political party on whatever issue. I think that runs against the responsibility of an ADM. But certainly most of the people who work within the civil service—and police officers, firefighters and others, I would argue—should have the political right that all other workers in this province have. They are workers, in the end, and I believe that as workers and citizens of the province, they need to be afforded the same political rights as other workers. It is important that people not only get an opportunity to express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the government every four years and to vote for the candidate of his or her choice, but it's also important to give people the right to be involved in the process. What happens if I happen to be a civil servant who wants to be involved in the local riding association in whatever riding I happen to live in? People have those political rights, and we should extend the ability for those workers within the ministries and agencies of the provincial government to do so.

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Now, there are a lot of rights that are presently afforded, and I don't want to approach this debate from the perspective of saying, "Hey, civil servants don't have a political right," because in fact we extended many of those rights in about 1991 or 1992 through reforms to the Public Service Act that were done at the time by Minister Frances Lankin. I remember that legislation coming forward in this House that afforded for the first time in the provincial government's history the right of civil servants to be involved in the political process. For example, my brother-in-law, who worked for the assessment office of the day—he's now retired—didn't have the right to put a political sign on his front lawn. It would have been a split household, which is a funny story, but nonetheless—

Interjection.

Mr. Bisson: He supported me. So people who worked at the assessment office and others didn't have the right to put a political sign out on the lawn, and I think that is unfair to citizens of the province who are engaged in the decision-making of who they think should be their representative at Queen's Park or Ottawa or whatever it might be. I think we need to afford workers of all levels an ability to be involved in the political process, because it is by involvement of citizens within that process that we're able to make the system better. How we develop better policy and how we make better government is by

having as many people as we can involved in the process who bring expertise and are able to basically affect the decision-making and affect the direction of a political party so that eventually those issues and those ideas get dealt with at the legislative level when their political parties are elected. I think that is a very important fact that we need to get into.

But I want to end, in the last five or six minutes that I have, on this point, and that is the entire process by which we come to the issue of developing legislation. You've heard me say this before. I think it's rather unfortunate that the process that we have in this House—and it is becoming increasingly difficult—is that ministers of the crown are given the mandate by the Premier to develop legislation. Legislation is tabled in the House. Most members, government as well as opposition, don't have a chance to read all of the legislation in detail, but we have such a rushed process of passing legislation that I think we give a disservice to the quality of the product we produce when we finally come back at third reading with a final version of the law that we're working on.

A couple of things have to happen. I believe there should be a fulsome debate at second reading, to the extent necessary. In some cases that might be a couple of sessional days because only two or three members in each political party have something to say on a particular piece of legislation. But we need to ensure and give members adequate time to be able to reflect on legislation and bring forward the views that they have and those of the citizens they represent at second reading.

But here's the kicker. We are short-shrifting, in my view, the role of committees. I think committees are the places where most of the good work of this Legislature can be done, and what ends up happening far too often, because we are in haste to pass legislation through, is that we don't take the time in committee that we need. I think sometimes bills have to be out there for a longer period of time just for the public to get their heads around them. I can think of a number of times when people all of a sudden have heard that a particular bill has passed and are either in favour or opposed or have a view one way or another, and it's passed third reading. Because they've only now seen it on the radar screen, they say, "Well, how come I never got a chance to say anything?" My answer to them is that governments are in haste to pass legislation.

Typically now, what happens is that a bill is introduced in the fall session, and by the end of the fall session it becomes law, and the government says, "Look how efficient we are." That was the argument the Conservatives would make. They would say, "Are we ever efficient in how we pass legislation." Well, it's not efficiency. Democracy is not about, you know—what's the old saying? It's not about making sausage. It's all about taking the time to have public debate on issues so that we are able to bring to this place the voices and thoughts of those people we represent.

There are some bills, I will agree, that can pass through this House quickly. They're bills that are fairly

straightforward, that are not complicated. They are not too technical and they deal with a particular issue that we can all understand and we can move on quickly. But sometimes bills—and I would say this is an example; another one is the long-term-care act that we presently have before the House as well—are fairly technical. We're all saying we agree with what is in Bill 158. Well, I don't know if we're all saying that, but some of us are saying we agree with the principles of what's in Bill 158. But let's be real. The bill in itself is 142 pages long. How many pieces of legislation is it amending? It's amending, I believe, about four or five different pieces of legislation. It's a very technical bill. I think it's unfair to the citizens to have a process that is rushed to pass such a bill through the House. I believe that bills like this should be given the time for public comment. And so what if we don't get our bill in the fall session? We'll get it in the spring session. It'll get passed. In the grand scheme of things, this Legislature has been around for over 100 years. What's another six months with one piece of legislation?

I really believe that one of the things we have to do is to be proactive in reaching out to the public and saying to those people affected by a particular law, "What do you think? This is your Legislature. How can we deal with this in a way that at the end of the day achieves the goals that we set as a government?" I say "we" for the Liberals—I'm not a Liberal. But government would say, if I were on the government side of the bench, that the government has the will to do it, that we do good work of making sure that what's in the bill actually does what it is you want to do.

We shouldn't be too hurried to pass legislation through this House when it comes to technical bills like this. I don't argue for a second that we need to hold up second reading for long periods of time, but we should ensure that members have adequate time to comment at second reading and that they're able to do that, that we don't try to cut short the debate time. But more importantly, put the bill out there at committee and inform citizens, by being proactive, that this bill is before whatever committee. "If you have an interest in commenting on this bill or giving us ideas, please get back to us. There will be committee hearings sometime in the winter intersession." That way, at least people are able to comment.

I know what's going to happen now, if we go out. We'll put something on the website, we'll put something in the papers, and we'll say to people, "By five days from now you have to tell us if you have an issue with this bill. Please call and let us know that you want to present." By the time somebody finds out, it might be on day four or five of the notice period, and then they've got to read the bill, and it's 142 pages long. All of a sudden they say, "Yes, I would like to make a presentation," but you're way past the deadline by which you're supposed to submit that you do want to make a presentation. I think we need to have longer periods of time where bills that are more technical in nature are out there so that the public has adequate time to be able to comment.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you and hope that the minister takes those comments into consideration.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Hon. Mr. Phillips: I did listen carefully. On the political process, for the member from Timmins-James Bay, about six or eight months ago we prepared a discussion paper which we did send to all three parties to get feedback. I think we got some feedback from both parties. We've been trying, through this process, to allow lots of input into it. This is an important piece of legislation, so it's not urgent to get it passed quickly.

On political rights, I think you'll find as you get into the bill—and by the way, I would say that we've had very good co-operation with our bargaining agents, the people who represent a large part of the 65,000 people who work for the public service. The political rights have been, if anything, expanded somewhat from where they are currently, so I don't think we're restricting any political rights. I think we've broadened the categories for more participation.

It does speak to the first point you made, which is that governments do change here. When you're in government, you don't like that thought, but that's democracy. The consistency is our public service—our non-partisan, professional, competent public service. Since I've been here—Liberal, NDP, Conservative and Liberal—we've all benefited from inheriting a first-class public service. So the member is right. The incoming government relies on our public service to implement the duly elected agenda that people have voted for. We live in a democracy; people have voted for a government. The public service has that responsibility. But I'm hopeful that this legislation also ensures that where there's gross mismanagement, breaking laws, endangering health or other serious matters, there is whistle-blowing protection within this legislation.

1740

Mr. O'Toole: The member from Timmins-James Bay is always able to comment, and rather insightfully, because he has been here 15 years or more and has served, I believe, as a union steward in his former life. So you pay close attention to rights, and it's good that you do. The minister's response is extremely important.

I would put on the record that this is the comment from Gary Gannage that we received, and it reads as follows: "AMAPCEO"—that's the Association of Management, Administrative and Professional Crown Employees of Ontario—"is ... very pleased that the government has fulfilled its commitment"—its promise—"to restore successor rights to Ontario civil servants, which will ensure that our members whose jobs are divested in the future can take the protections of their collective agreement with them to their new employer"—dealing with outsourcing and that.

It is controversial; there's no question of that. I just want to be on the record that this was a commitment, I think, as part of getting an agreement with them to tacitly support Bill 158. The whistle-blower provision—what

protection and what is the role of the union in ensuring that protection?

Now we're into the mechanics of the bill itself. As with many of the bills, this government has taken on a new tone as of today. We had time allocation and we forced through a very deliberate budget bill, and they're now getting impatient because they're running out of time to bring things to fruition in their term—all the promises that aren't going to be kept. So there are deals being made, and I think this is why public hearings will clear the air on this, to make sure that all taxpayers of Ontario—civil servants and private sector and all—will be treated fairly. That's all we want: for people to have access to fairness.

Ms. DiNovo: I also second Mr. Bisson and the suggestion that we really do need some time to hear from stakeholders here. Personally, I would love to hear from OPSEU members, I'd love to hear from Ontario Provincial Police members about this bill and have them engaged in lively debate so that we can carry their voice forward and make whatever amendments, in committee of course, that they would want to see made.

I also hearken back again to my own experience in ethics during that by-election in Parkdale-High Park. I have to say that there were some Liberals during that campaign who came forward and expressed to me their grief. They were appalled at the way some of the members of, in this case, the civil service, the government team, were acting during that campaign. They wished they could go to the press and speak out about that kind of, might I say, American style of campaigning, of smearing and of attacking someone's integrity in a community rather than dealing with the issues. So I would be very interested in hearing from the minister who is proposing this bill, who was very right to reprimand the person in his office who engaged in that activity—I would like to hear how one would use this bill to make it possible for Liberals within the caucus and the party to actually have a voice about the way campaigns are operated. Of course, I would like to see redress in my own instance; possibly an apology. There's lots of time still in the session for that. So it would be interesting to see some ethical redress and how that would go, how it would look, how it would be enacted, how one would go about getting that. Again, this is the minister who brought in this bill that has to do with ethics. I'd like to see the actual mechanics and I'd like to see ethical action coming out of this bill in my own case.

Mr. Ramal: I was listening to the member from Timmins-James Bay speaking for 15 minutes about the importance of the bill, the importance of the civil servants to be in a good position. I listened to him when he was talking about civil servants under the Conservative regime, how much they suffered—and badly suffered, I guess. I was one of them; back then I used to work for the government, and I know how many of my colleagues were complaining all the time. They didn't know if they'd have a job—or they didn't have a job.

There was a lot of pressure. Also, hopefully he'll be convinced by the response from the minister when he was talking about how we didn't want to rush any piece of legislation. We want to make sure that the bill goes in the right way, the right passage.

I want to listen to the people of Ontario. Since I got elected in 2003, I have served on many different committees. I want to listen to all the people all the time. We didn't force any bill. That's why we believe strongly that we have to listen to the people of Ontario; we have to listen to all the stakeholders; we have to listen to all the people involved in any piece of legislation.

I had the chance to serve this morning under Bill 124. We heard so many stakeholders who came forward and commended the government for the great job they're doing and also because we listen to them. This bill is a great indication of our listening to the people.

As has been mentioned, this act has never been touched since 1878. Nobody touched it. So many governments tried and then did nothing with it until Minister Gerry Phillips took the leadership and brought it forward and wants to deal with it in a professional manner. We listened for six months to the people. We went to all the parties and asked them what they think is the best way to deliver. That's why we're debating this legislation here in the House. Today we listen to you, as members of the third party, we listen to the Conservatives and we also want to go to committee to listen to many people to get it right.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Member for Timmins-James Bay, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Bisson: I was just trying to talk to my Conservative friends because I remember us, as a government, changing this act, to my good friend from whatever riding it is, I'm sorry.

Mr. Ramal: London-Fanshawe.

Mr. Bisson: London-Fanshawe: The Public Service Act wasn't changed only in 1878. Just think, it's so much fun coming to this place. The other day when we were in question period, the Attorney General got up and said, "This is the biggest change to democracy since 1347," and, as government, likes to lean back over the years and talk about how these are earth-shattering changes and tries to pile them up against what happened in history.

I just say, listen, let's be real here. This act has been changed at least twice since I've been here. This will be the third time I've seen this act changed. I saw it changed by us, I saw it changed by the Tories and now I'm seeing it changed by you. So this is not earth-shattering.

In my comments, to the minister across the way, I wasn't disagreeing with you. I agree with the concept. My point is that we need to take proper time at committee, and I think you understand where I'm coming from, to make sure that we canvass properly those people who will be affected by this bill. To say, "Let's put a posting on the Ontario legislative website and put advertising in the Toronto Star, the Sun and wherever else and five days or 10 days later people can write to us"—I think people who are affected by this bill have to have a

chance to take a look at it. That's why I would argue that, although you did do some consultation before drafting this bill, and I acknowledge that, we need to give those people who will be affected the opportunity to read it, take a look at it and come back to us in the intersession and say, "We may only need a day. We may need five days. It depends on how many people want to come forward, so that we can make sure to get it right." You know as well as I do—you've been here longer than me—how often we have tried, with good intentions, to change bills and have ended up falling short because we haven't taken the time to do it right. That's what my comments were all about.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr. Berardinetti: I thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on this bill for a few minutes. Bill 158, An Act to revise legislation related to the public service of Ontario, repeals the Public Service Act and makes various other amendments to acts regarding the rights of certain public servants.

I want to start off by saying that the date—I think it was 1878—is important because, since then, successive governments have tried in this chamber or in the province to change the provisions regarding public servants, and what has happened is that it's gone through the regular first reading, second reading and third reading but it has not been proclaimed, and a bill doesn't become law until it's proclaimed. At least that's my understanding of how it works, and that is through the Lieutenant Governor's office, and "proclamation" means that it becomes law.

When the NDP were in power, they did discuss this bill. I wasn't here at the time. They did bring it forward and wanted to make changes but it was not proclaimed. We are determined to proclaim this bill and make it law. First reading of the bill occurred on November 2. We're beginning second reading, I believe, today—the date is November 15, if the calendar there is correct—and we'll move into committee, I'm sure. I certainly do not dispute the fact that we need to take this to committee for further consultation and tweaking and changes. Finally, it will come forward for third reading. After that, hopefully, we'll see proclamation take place. That is the expectation that we have here in government, that this becomes law, and with that, we have a strengthening of the rights that are provided, especially for public servants, in areas such as whistle-blowing where they feel that there's some wrongdoing but are afraid to report that wrongdoing and want to be protected. There are provisions in this bill here, as I read through it, that protect public servants who come forward and want to bring forward some kind of abuse or concern they have with what's happening in their department or their division or whatever part of the public service they work in.

1750

In my three years in this government, I've seen that we do hold our public servants in high regard, and we hold in respect the work that they do. That is clear in the various legislation and the comments made by the various ministers. Especially, our Premier values and we all

value the high work of our public servants. We want to provide them with the best working environment possible. We respect the work they do and we want to make sure that they have the protection they need to do their job properly. If one public servant is doing their work properly but sees that another one is not doing their work or perhaps is taking on a second job or is not doing the job they're supposed to be doing and wants to report that for the benefit of everyone in the department, then that person can do that. They can do it safely. We want to make sure that that's done to protect those public servants who want to do that.

Again—this was mentioned earlier—we've had several different groups and organizations come forward and say that this is the right thing to do. We know that this is the right direction to go; it's strong. The Leader of the Opposition, John Tory, is quoted as saying, "One government after another didn't do it. I think it is high time that it is being done and I'm glad that they're doing it." That was in the *Toronto Star*, Friday, November 3, page A7. So even the Leader of the Opposition has acknowledged that this is a good thing and that it's the right thing to, to try to strengthen the whistle-blowing legislation, as we call it, or whistle-blower legislation, that's contained in this bill.

I'm also happy that we consulted with bargaining agents, current and former ministry executives, government agencies and members of all parties and that the feedback was positive and constructive. It doesn't mean that we put this bill into effect immediately. We still need to debate it here in the Legislature, send it off to committee, hear from more people who want to speak to this bill—maybe they have something they want to say about this bill that we don't know—make the necessary changes at committee, bring it back for third reading, incorporate those changes in that committee and hopefully proclaim it afterwards. So I think that this is the right direction and we should move on this in a quick but thorough fashion so that all those who are interested in saying something about the Public Service of Ontario Statute Law Amendment Act, this bill, 158, will have a chance to do so.

We're proposing to strengthen our public service legislation, and it's based on the fundamental principles of accountability, competency, non-partisanship and professionalism. We're committed to fairness and balance in labour relations. The public service of Ontario is held in high esteem here in the Legislature, as I said earlier, but I think throughout this country and perhaps throughout the world. We know that the people who work for us, the people who work for the people of Ontario, the vast majority of them do an excellent job and do their very best to serve the people of Ontario. We want to make sure that this continues to exist.

We're delivering on another promise: We're delivering on our commitment to put whistle-blower protection in place. Our proposed rules are stronger than those proposed previously because they give authority to an independent officer, the Integrity Commissioner, to in-

investigate allegations of wrongdoing. So if a public servant wants to complain and goes to their superior or someone within their division or their section and feels uncomfortable there or does not want to go that route, the Integrity Commissioner can come into the picture and deal with that problem.

The act ensures that the employees of Ontario—the ministries and agencies—have the ability to disclose a serious wrongdoing without fear of threat or reprisal, because a lot of people would be afraid—I can see why—to go forward and complain about somebody else. They would fear, “You know what? If I complain about this person not doing their job, somebody else is going to do something to me.” We’ve put provisions in here to protect those individuals who want to come forward to speak about any wrongdoings. I think this is extremely positive.

Also, in the area of conflict of interest, this bill reinforces public confidence that decisions are made in the public interest. It ensures that ministries and agencies have a clear and consistent standard of integrity. The bill provides additional powers, duties and functions to the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. It preserves agency independence by permitting agencies to create their own conflict-of-interest rules, subject to approval by the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, ensuring consistency with conflict-of-interest rules for ministries and other agencies. You want to make sure that people are not in positions of conflict of interest, and that power is given to various agencies to ensure that the conflict-of-interest guidelines are being followed.

We also established the role of an ethics executive, a senior official in a ministry or agency who provides advice and direction about conflict of interest to public

servants and who refers the matter to the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. Having this ethics executive is very important because things become more and more complicated. There are so many more rules in place, and sometimes, inadvertently, people may not know what is right or what is wrong in a certain situation—whether they can go out and work on an election campaign or take on a second job or do something else, while they remain as a second—

Mr. O’Toole: On a point of order, Speaker: I believe a quorum may not be present.

The Deputy Speaker: Is a quorum present?

The Clerk-at-the-Table: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Scarborough Southwest, you have about one minute.

Mr. Berardinetti: I didn’t realize my speech was so boring. Maybe I drew everybody out of the Legislature. Jeez, you know, I feel bad. It was one of my rare opportunities to get up and speak for a good 15 minutes, and everyone disappears.

Applause.

Mr. Berardinetti: Thank you. Should I start from the beginning?

Interjections.

Mr. Berardinetti: No? Okay. Mr. Speaker, I think it’s close to 6 o’clock right now, and I’ll stop my comments there.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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No. 120B

N° 120B

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 15 November 2006

Mercredi 15 novembre 2006



Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 15 November 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 15 novembre 2006

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MINISTRY OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES
CONSUMER PROTECTION AND SERVICE
MODERNIZATION ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 DU MINISTÈRE
DES SERVICES GOUVERNEMENTAUX
SUR LA MODERNISATION DES SERVICES
ET DE LA PROTECTION
DU CONSOMMATEUR

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 2, 2006, on the motion for second reading of Bill 152, An Act to modernize various Acts administered by or affecting the Ministry of Government Services / Projet de loi 152, Loi visant à moderniser diverses lois qui relèvent du ministère des Services gouvernementaux ou qui le touchent.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? There being none, Mr. Phillips has moved second reading of Bill 152. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

I have received, pursuant to standing order 28(h), a request by Minister Phillips for the vote on second reading of Bill 152 to be deferred until deferred votes on November 16, 2006.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House is adjourned until 10 of the clock, November 16.

The House adjourned at 1847.

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N° 121

ISSN 1180-2987

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of Ontario**

Second Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 16 novembre 2006

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

SAFE NEEDLES SAVE LIVES ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR L'UTILISATION D'AIGUILLES SÛRES POUR SAUVER DES VIES

Ms. Martel moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 30, An Act to reduce the incidence of needlestick injuries / Projet de loi 30, Loi visant à réduire les incidences de blessures causées par des piqûres d'aiguille.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, Ms. Martel, you have up to 10 minutes.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I want to begin by acknowledging Linda Haslam-Stroud, president of ONA, who is in the gallery today. She is here with a number of health care workers, making their way in, who are represented by ONA, SEIU, OPSEU and UFCW. I want to say to all of you as you come in that this bill is about your right to be safe at work. It's also about the right of other workers and the general public to be safe from harm, if and when unsafe sharps and medical devices are improperly disposed of.

This is the second time this bill has been debated at second reading. Last March, the bill was sent to committee but never saw the light of day after that. I'm hoping that this time the bill will be passed so that we can truly protect workers and the general public.

Bill 30 will protect workers and the public from needlestick and medical sharps injuries. These injuries result from medical devices that have points or blades capable of puncturing the skin. The most common sharps injury is the skin puncture by a needle attached to a syringe. A worker punctured by a point or a blade may then be exposed to more than 33 blood-borne diseases, including very serious or deadly ones like hepatitis C or HIV/AIDS.

SEIU, ONA and OPSEU estimate that some 33,000 needle-stick injuries occur in the health care sector in Ontario every year. Of that number, some 17,000 occur in the acute care sector. From April 2005 until this month, one Toronto area hospital alone had 64 injuries involving sharps. Each needle-stick injury, on average,

costs the health care system \$2,000 in testing and treatment, although for those suffering from serious or deadly diseases, the costs far exceed that.

In Ontario, some \$66 million are spent every year on workers who have had needle-stick injuries. This doesn't include the WSIB costs associated with lost-time claims, and it doesn't include the emotional cost to workers and their families as they undergo months of testing to determine if they have contracted a disease from a used needle.

The fact is, workers don't have to suffer from needlestick injuries. The technology exists to replace conventional needles and sharps with safety-engineered medical devices that have been approved by Health Canada. They have built-in features that, when engaged, prevent the blade or point of the device from coming into contact with the user of the device or another person. While the safety features differ, they all eliminate the possibility of injury by contact with contaminated blood in or on the device.

My bill would make it mandatory for employers in prescribed workplaces to provide for and ensure the use of safety-engineered medical sharps in any circumstances where a worker is required to use a medical sharp. The employer must consult with the joint health and safety committee on the selection of the safety-engineered device and must provide training in the use of those devices. In workplaces without committees, the employer must still provide training in the use of these devices. The bill includes sections from Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety Act regarding inspectors, inspections, orders, whistle-blower protection and penalties for non-compliance by employers. The provisions make it clear that needle-stick injuries are serious health and safety issues and have to be dealt with as such.

I've reintroduced this bill for two reasons. First, it's clear that the use of safety-engineered medical devices and sharps reduces injuries and saves money. In the United States, the Needlestick Safety and Prevention Act came into effect in 2001. Although it is federal law, it applies to state jurisdictions. Twenty US states have also enacted their own, even more stringent, legal requirements involving safety-engineered sharps. In 2003, a study of the impact of the federal law was published by researchers at the International Health Care Worker Safety Center at the University of Virginia. It showed that after only one year of implementation, with only one quarter of workplaces in compliance, there was a 51% reduction in needle-stick injuries.

But an Ontario example is also valuable in this regard. At Toronto East General Hospital, a detailed audit of sharps-related injuries in the workplace showed an urgent need for best practices to deal with this serious health and safety issue. The hospital identified blood collection, patient injection and IV insertion as the areas with the highest risk. The joint health and safety committee presented a proposal to senior management to move in a staged way to safety-engineered devices. The original goal was to reduce sharps injuries by 20% in the first year, but this was easily surpassed when the hospital went from 41 reported sharps injuries in 2003 to eight in 2004. Injuries during blood collection were completely eliminated that year as well. Not only were the injuries reduced, but so were the costs associated with needle-stick accidents. In 2001, with conventional needles and sharps, accidents cost the hospital \$28,000. After 2004, these costs dropped to \$8,500.

1010

The second reason I have reintroduced this bill is because Ontario lags far behind other jurisdictions, and it's embarrassing and shameful that this government can't get the message about what needs to be done. In 2004, Alberta implemented safety sharps legislation. On January 1, 2006, sharps regulations went into effect in both Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Nova Scotia's sharps regulations will be implemented on January 1, 2007, and British Columbia's regulations take effect on January 1, 2008. But in Ontario, the McGuinty Liberal government has done precious little, even though the unions representing workers who are most at risk have made it clear that this is a priority for them. In three different meetings with the former Minister of Health, the health care Health and Safety Action Group told the minister that mandatory use of safety-engineered medical devices was essential. In a November 19, 2004, letter to the minister, the group said:

"First, we need legislation to ensure that safety-engineered medical devices are introduced within the next year to health care workplaces across the province. Over 33,000 health care workers suffer needle-stick injuries every year in Ontario.... A regulation requiring the mandatory use of safety-engineered needles and other medical devices will not only eliminate up to 90% of such devastating injuries, but will actually result in a net savings of precious health care dollars."

This government's response was a one-off, one-time-only announcement of some \$11 million to hospitals in March 2005 to help them buy some safety-engineered devices and sharps. When the money was gone, workers were put at risk again with the use of conventional needles. How silly was that? The Sault Star had it right. In an editorial it ran on March 14, 2005, which was carried two days later in the Toronto Star, it said:

"Ontario's Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has taken a step in the right direction by earmarking extra cash for hospitals to buy safer medical equipment this year, but it's not good enough....

"The government should make instruments such as safety-engineered needles mandatory in all hospitals and

clinics—and funding for the equipment should be allocated as part of every facility's annual operating budget rather than a one-time infusion of \$11.6 million....

"Health care workers put themselves into dangerous situations every hour of every day to help the people of Ontario, and it is unconscionable to subject them to ... unnecessary risks when a ready solution exists.

"Needles also pose a danger to everyone who might come into contact with the instruments until they are safely destroyed or buried. That includes hospital custodial staff, refuse collection personnel and even members of the public.

"Ontario already suffers a dearth of health care providers in many disciplines. Every effort must be made to protect them from infection that can remove them from the front lines temporarily or, even more tragically, permanently.

"This one is a no-brainer: Replace all conventional needles with safe versions, the sooner the better."

Regrettably, 20 months to the day since the Toronto Star said this was a no-brainer, here we are again, trying to convince the McGuinty Liberals to do the right thing. No doubt, this morning, some government members will defend their lack of action by noting that in September 2006 the current Minister of Labour appointed a permanent health and safety advisory committee to provide advice on protecting health care workers. No doubt a government member will say that this committee should look at this issue, and if the members recommend the mandatory use of safety-engineered devices and sharps, then maybe the government will finally do something on this front. This is not good enough. The mandatory use of safety-engineered medical sharps is a serious health and safety issue in Ontario. No one has to suffer a needle-stick injury, because the technology exists to replace conventional devices with safe devices. Five other provinces have seen the wisdom of making safe devices mandatory in their workplaces. When will the McGuinty government get serious about protecting our workers and the general public too?

In closing, I want to thank SEIU, OPSEU, ONA and UFCW for their support of Bill 30. Most importantly, I'd like to thank the workers who are here today. This bill is about what we can and should be doing to protect you when you go to work. I hope we can get Bill 30 to and through committee so it will become the law in Ontario.

Interruption.

The Deputy Speaker: I would remind our guests in the gallery that only the members on the floor are to participate in the proceedings. Thank you.

Further debate?

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill today. Of course, all members of this Legislature are very much concerned about the safety of our front-line workers. I want to join Ms. Martel in welcoming the SEIU and ONA representatives who are here and our other front-line workers. Oh wow, we've got a whole crowd moving in up there. Great. Nice to see you all here today. We certainly appreciate the work you're doing on the front lines.

As most in this House know, this is the second effort by Ms. Martel to introduce this legislation; it was first introduced as Bill 179. We do have some concerns with this particular piece of legislation, while recognizing that there is a need, of course, to protect all of our front-line workers across the province.

One initiative that the government has undertaken in order to ensure the safety of our front-line workers was, as Ms. Martel, the member for Nickel Belt, indicated, the introduction through the Ministry of Labour of a new special committee that will be looking at different ways to ensure the safety of our front-line workers in the health field in particular. I think this is an important initiative. It's important that we receive a great deal of input from our front-line workers directly on how we can better protect them and how we can ensure their safety in their work on a day-to-day basis.

In her submission, Ms. Martel referred to other jurisdictions and the fact that, in her view, we are lagging behind. I'd just like to set the record straight. Manitoba may have introduced their legislation in 2004, but it only came into effect in January 2006. As well, the Saskatchewan legislation that she referred to, which introduces the use of SEMDs in some circumstances, came into effect in July 2006.

I would like to point out that with respect to the legislation in other jurisdictions, they differ from the member from Nickel Belt's bill in that they are taking a very limited approach by identifying only high-risk activities for the first stage of implementation. In fact, Bill 30 would apply to all medical sharps right from the beginning. So I wonder if, in her response at the end of her submissions, the member for Nickel Belt perhaps would reflect on a more staged approach in the implementation of these requirements as opposed to the immediate approach to all medical sharps and, as well, reflect on the wisdom of the other jurisdictions in taking this staged approach.

We recognize that there has been some study done in this area. Certainly the Toronto East General Hospital example is a good one of where we've seen a reduction in sharps injuries with the introduction of an SEMD program. However, there is much variation on the actual cost of the introduction of that program at that hospital, and I think it is one of the factors we do need to look at when we look at the introduction of this kind of initiative.

I'd also like to ask the member for Nickel Belt a few specific questions about her legislation. In her legislation she talks about medical sharps, and it's a very broadly defined word. It could be interpreted to include almost any sharp equipment that's used in a hospital or a medical facility. I would like to ask her what her position is on defining that perhaps a little more narrowly.

As well, I understand that there is some concern in the sector about a certification system for safety-engineered medical devices, and the fact we don't have such a certification system, so that any manufacturer could call any of their products an SEMD without any assurance that in fact they are an SEMD or that they meet the requirements or the safety standards in any medical facility.

Also, SEMDs may not be available to substitute for some current sharps, such as spinal taps, bone marrow, and surgical instruments such as suture needles and acupuncture needles. That's my information, and I wonder what provisions the member for Nickel Belt would see putting into place in order to address some of those concerns.

We have in fact made some headway with respect to this issue in the medical field. In 2005, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care announced an investment of \$11.6 million for hospitals to purchase SEMDs. That's a substantial amount of money. It was to improve the health and safety of our front-line workers.

We've made substantial investments in a number of areas to improve the health and safety of front-line workers over the last number of years, in both long-term care—which of course is near and dear to my heart—and in our hospitals. We've invested in lifts in order to assist our front-line workers and to assist some of those front-line workers to continue their careers longer than they had possibly planned.

Our goal, of course, is to ensure a safe workplace for all Ontario health workers. We certainly value the good work that's being done by all representatives of the health care field across the province. I again would like to acknowledge those who are here today supporting Ms. Martel and this bill.

I look forward to hearing from Ms. Martel on those specific issues that I raised with respect to her legislation and hearing what remedies she would see moving forward.

1020

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): I'm pleased to have a few moments this morning to speak to Bill 30, An Act to reduce the incidence of needlestick injuries, which was introduced in this House by the member for Nickel Belt back on November 15, 2005. I understand that this bill was introduced previously, in a previous session of this Parliament. The member is bringing it forward again because, unfortunately, the government did not see fit to allow it to move forward at that time.

I want to begin by complimenting the member for Nickel Belt. I've worked with the member in committee over the years from time to time, and certainly in this House for the past 16 years. I see her as a very effective and smart member of this Legislature who is passionate about her beliefs, committed to her philosophy and hard-working in the pursuit of her objectives. I know that next year the member will be celebrating 20 years in this Legislature. I'm not sure if she's going to be celebrating or not, but that's quite a feat, certainly, especially given the youth of the member. I happen to know exactly how old she is. To have served in the Ontario Legislature for 20 years is something that is commendable indeed.

I also wish to recognize and thank the people who are here representing front-line health care workers for their presence and their interest in this bill. Hopefully the government will take note because of your presence.

This bill, Safe Needles Save Lives Act, 2006, is a bill for which I want to express strong support in this

Legislature this morning. Our caucus in the past has expressed support for this. I think it's a bill that needs to be passed by this Legislature this morning and sent to committee for further discussion. I know that the member for Nipissing in her presentation this morning, speaking on behalf of the government, expressed a number of issues that she sees. Surely we can address those issues at committee so as to allow this bill to move forward. I hope that the government won't get caught up in the technicalities of this in such a way that it prevents the bill from moving forward, because this bill is certainly needed, from what I understand.

I'm told that every year in Ontario there are more than 33,000 health care workers who are accidentally stuck with needles. Obviously, in every single one of these cases the people who are affected by these accidents would go through a period of severe concern for what might happen after that because of the contagious diseases that they're confronted with every day in the course of their work. We have to be sensitive to this, obviously. The member for Nickel Belt has talked about the fact that in a number of other provinces, and even in the United States, there has been progress on this issue in a way that demonstrates that Ontario is lagging behind, so we have work to do in that regard.

Private members' business is an important opportunity for MPPs to bring forward issues that otherwise the government of the day is unwilling or unable to address. This bill certainly falls into this category. It's an important issue that needs to be accepted by the government and allowed to move forward.

I believe in private members' business. Right now I have four private members' ballot items before the Legislature: three resolutions and one bill. The resolution that I introduced almost a year and a half ago calls upon the government to instruct the standing committee on finance and economic affairs to immediately begin an investigation into Ontario's industrial and economic competitiveness to develop an action plan to maintain and expand our domestic and international markets in the coming years. Today I was informed that Lear Corp. in Kitchener, which is an important manufacturing plant in Waterloo-Wellington in the Kitchener part of my riding that I've visited many times, is going to be losing 111 jobs as a result of a restructuring. It's something that obviously concerns me as the MPP, concerns the city of Kitchener and concerns the union that represents these workers, as well as the company. This again underlines the need for dramatic action on the part of the government by instructing the standing committee to come up with a jobs plan. I'm going to be talking about this in the coming weeks, certainly, in the Ontario Legislature.

I also have a resolution which calls up on the government of Ontario to establish a fund to support the families of first responders such as firefighters, police officers, paramedics and medical personnel who lose their lives in the line of duty, providing a benefit of at least \$500,000 to the families of these fallen heroes. I had a chance to discuss this issue with my friends at the Ontario Profes-

sional Fire Fighters Association lobby day yesterday and at their reception last night, and a number of them are very interested in this issue as well.

I have another issue which I've called upon the House to address, and that is the fact that we don't get enough opportunities, as private members, to discuss issues in this Legislature on Thursday mornings. Most of us, as private members, perhaps get an opportunity once, on average, every 18 months, and I'm suggesting and proposing that we begin private members' business at 9 o'clock every Thursday morning so that we can do three private members' ballot items each week. I believe that is a relatively modest reform, but it would dramatically increase the number of private members' ballot item opportunities that members of this Legislature have. In all likelihood, I believe we'd then have at least one chance every year instead of one every year and a half. I think that would be of benefit in enhancing the role of the private member, and it's something I've called upon the government to do for quite some time.

I also have a private member's bill, which most members are aware of—certainly the members who served in the previous Parliament—An Act to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997—

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Waterloo-Wellington, I remind you that we're discussing Bill 30 this morning.

Mr. Arnott: Yes, I'm certainly aware of that, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate your assistance in that respect. I want to talk about Bill 30 in the context of the other private members' ballot items that all of us bring forward in this Legislature.

My Bill 44 would protect double-hatter firefighters, who, as we know, are full-time professional firefighters who work for a fire department, typically in a city, but may live in a small town nearby and want to serve their home communities as volunteer firefighters. Of course, there is a need for legislation to allow them to do that without the threat of expulsion from their union. I continue to advocate for that issue as well.

You're quite right, Mr. Speaker. I need to get back to the health care issue. Bill 30 is an important issue, not just in hospitals but also in nursing homes. Last week, during constituency week, I had the opportunity to address a fairly large group at the Chateau Gardens nursing home in Elmira, and they were very concerned about the government's Bill 140 and the need to have an upgrade program for the residents who live in B and C nursing homes. Something like 35,000 residents live in older nursing homes, and they have asked me to bring forward concerns in the Legislature and to encourage the government to make renewal of a home's licence dependent on what matters most to residents, families and communities: the home's performance in meeting the act and taking away the cloud of uncertainty by not linking the licence renewal to the structural classification of the home. Instead, they are asking that the government introduce a new section in the act that empowers the minister to establish an appropriate capital renewal

program with mandatory time frames for operators to complete this renewal.

This is a very serious health care issue in my riding, as well, I know, as in other ridings across the province. I would expect that most MPPs were approached by long-term-care homes in their ridings during constituency week. Of course, this comes into the broader health care issue, but I wanted to bring that to the attention of the House today. I appreciate the response I have received from members today to the issues I have raised.

I want to congratulate, once again, the member for Nickel Belt for the good work she is doing on this issue and implore the government to support it, to allow the bill to go to committee and have meaningful hearings, and to bring the bill back to the House and allow a third reading vote so that the bill can become law.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): There's a famous quote by Burke that goes: "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good people to do nothing." I think you've witnessed—and I welcome our visitors here today—a little bit of that nothing and how it happens. You heard from our colleagues across the floor the way things don't happen here—that is, you constantly make excuses or poke holes at small portions of a bill so that the bill stagnates or doesn't pass—and over here you heard an eloquent discussion, not of the bill on the floor but about every other bill that is before the House.

I'd like to actually talk about the bill and Shelley Martel's brave act in bringing it forward, because we're not talking about anything here; we're talking about an act that will actually save lives, and when we don't pass it, lives are lost. It's that simple and it's that serious.

What caught my eye this morning, in looking over the information about this act, was this Vancouver Sun article, where "Two grade 3 boys were on their school's playground with little more to worry about"—it says—"than their free time running out before the Tuesday morning bell rang.

"Now one of the boys will need to endure blood tests, anti-viral medication and a long six-month wait to find out if he's been infected with a communicable disease from the poke of a dirty syringe.

"When the Ten-Broeck elementary pupils found the two used needles in their play area, one boy picked up the needles and jabbed the other in the shoulder." Children at play. What do they know?

"The pierced pupil was tested for HIV and hepatitis B and C." Children. Now, that's not you; that's not OPSEU members; that's not SEIU members; that's not nursing staff who have to ensure this, day in and day out; these are children in a playground who are affected by the lack of this legislation.

1030

I want to bring my own story from Parkdale–High Park, my own riding, about a wonderful individual who has now passed away. This individual was part of our Sunday afternoon drop-in and dinner program. He, like many in that program, had mental health and addiction issues. This particular individual had the addiction issue

of heroin abuse and used needles all the time, and, trust me, they were not safe. He took it upon himself to do a little bit of good Samaritan work in our riding, such as he could. What he would do is he would walk around the neighbourhood, particularly around the schools, and pick up used syringes and take them back for recycling. I want to repeat that. He would walk around schools, walk around the riding, and pick up used syringes. These were syringes used by heroin addicts and others. These were not clean syringes; these were syringes that carried all sorts of disease, around schools.

I remember sitting at a wonderful restaurant on Queen Street, Mitzi's Sister—and if you sit at Mitzi's Sister and look out the window, you can see a driveway there next to an abandoned old building on Queen Street and you can watch drug deals going down every hour. You can watch people disappear into the alleyway, and they come out, and they disappear, and they come out. They're also using drugs and they're also shooting up in that alleyway. Then, if you stay there long enough, past 3:30, you can watch the children from Parkdale high school and other schools in the vicinity coming home from school, walking through that same alleyway.

I went out on a drive-around with 14 division—it was an honour—on Friday night and saw what they have to do for a living. That morning I met with parole officers and saw what they had to do for a living. I asked the staff sergeant on Friday night about this very issue, and he said, "We have 20 cars for 200,000 people. We can't even do the calls that we need to make—the assaults in progress, the B and Es in progress—never mind take time out of our cruisers, take time off our bikes, to look around the dirt in the alleyways in Parkdale–High Park to see if we can find syringes lying there."

It's not just the alleyways, of course; it's the lakeshore. Anybody who likes to run—and I like to run—along the lakeshore will know that if you go out early enough, you'll see the same thing: littered syringes. This is not only true, of course, of Parkdale–High Park; it's true of many areas in this city.

So it's not only about people who are in the field, those who risk their lives for us in delivering health care and keeping our correctional facilities open; it's also about those little children who just happen to be walking home from school one day or the average passerby just wandering along who picks up the wrong thing at the wrong time.

I just wanted to run past the stats again in case we missed them, because these are horrific. They're not just figures; they're lives. Sometimes when we debate business in this House, one would think we were talking about widgets and not people. These are lives we're talking about.

Thirty-three thousand is the estimated annual number of needle-stick injuries in the health care sector. Sixty-four million dollars is the estimated annual cost of testing and treating needle-stick injuries in the health care sector. Thirty-two million dollars is the estimated annual cost of testing and treating needle-stick injuries in acute care.

Twenty-two million dollars is the estimated cost to completely convert all acute care workplaces in Ontario to safety-engineered devices—so there's a difference there. Four million dollars is the estimated amount the Ontario government will save by replacing conventional needles in acute care after realizing an 82% drop in injuries. Sometimes when you read these figures, you have to pause—an 82% drop in injuries. That's what we're talking about, as well as saving money. Two thousand dollars—a piddling amount, but still—is the minimum cost of testing and providing preventive treatment for each worker who suffers a needle-stick injury, multiplied by thousands. One hundred and ninety is the estimated number of needle-stick injuries every day. Again, I bring that number home to this House—190. As we're speaking, as we're listening to why we can't do something, as we're listening to other bills that have no relevance over this bill, 190 people right now are wondering whether they're going to be HIV-infected, whether they have hep B or hep C. They're waiting, their families are waiting and suffering along with them, until they get that result—190 people. It's interesting that this debate lasts an hour. It would be interesting to break it down. How many people at this time, while we're debating this bill again in this hour, are suffering and waiting for that result? Interesting. What will the result be? What will the effect on their lives be?

To continue along, it's not like we don't have examples of other bills. I heard my colleague Ms. Smith talk about some of the problems, let's say. Well, we have legislation. Where do we have it? We have it in Manitoba. We have it in Saskatchewan. We have it in Alberta. We have it in Nova Scotia. We have it in British Columbia. Surely, we have examples already of legislation that has been passed that managed to make it through. Surely, with those examples, we can rework this in any way necessary. I'm sure Ms. Martel knows this. She has encountered this before. This is no reason not to pass this now. This is no reason not to save the next 190 people who will have to go through this tomorrow. Here's one, Bill 13, given royal assent on July 14 in Nova Scotia. They managed to do it. Manitoba managed to do it. Saskatchewan managed to do it. British Columbia managed to do it. Alberta managed to do it. Why can't we?

Just to conclude, I'll remind everyone about that quote. It's a quote that offers some hope to me when I think of myself as a good person some days, and that is, "All it takes for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing."

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the chance to comment on Bill 30, introduced by the member from Nickel Belt. I believe she tried to introduce it before, under a different number, I think Bill 179.

I was listening to many different members speak in the House and of course the member from Nickel Belt when she was explaining why she wants to pass that bill. It's a very important issue. We talk about the front-line work-

ers in the health professions, and we see a lot of people giving their life. As you know, many of those workers are subject to many different diseases, to different obstacles that might hurt them, that might cost them their life. I was one of them at one time, in a previous life. I used to work at a big facility. I was also exposed to many different diseases and different objects. I think it's very important to create safety around the people who work on the front line. We have a lot of people from the health sector with us here today in the gallery. I want to welcome them. I believe they do an excellent job on behalf of all of us in the province of Ontario.

I was listening to the member from Nickel Belt when she was talking about it and also was listening to my colleague Monique Smith when she was talking about there being no definitions about the sharp objects. As you know, we have to define which objects we are talking about. It's very important for all of us to know which objects are the most dangerous ones. I have strong faith in the people who work in that field to choose the best and the most effective instrument to deal with their clients on a daily basis. We don't take safety in this province lightly, especially in health care. When we took office in 2003, we had the lowest number of inspectors in that field in the whole nation: 3.8 for every 100,000 health care workers. When we took office, we hired more than 200 health care inspectors to make sure that safety was being applied in many different spots in the province of Ontario.

Also, in order to maintain safety in health work, the Minister of Labour has a round table of the people who work in that field to advise on a regular basis. It's important for all of us to create a safety mechanism for all the people who work in the health professions. I myself and my colleague visit many long-term-care homes in the London region and many different spots in Ontario on a regular basis to make sure all the workers use the right safety equipment. Also, the Minister of Health invested a great amount of money to supply many long-term-care facilities and homes with safe and new equipment to help the workers to lift the clients and not injure themselves. We invested more than \$12 million in that field to supply the hospitals and clinics and many places in the province with tools to deal with their clients in a safe way.

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Also, as I mentioned, we pay a lot of attention to health care in Ontario, and we want to make sure that all the health workers on the front line are safe and using safe equipment. It's important for all of us, because those people, the health workers in Ontario, maintain our health, maintain our capacity to go back to work, and we want to give them the chance, the capacity and the tools to continue to work and to serve the great people of Ontario.

We don't take this issue lightly. We have faith in the hospitals and the health professionals to use safe equipment. We believe that if they have any concerns, any issues, they have a right to have all the tools and mechanisms, to ask the Minister of Health to equip them with

the best and the most sophisticated equipment being used, not just in Canada but maybe in the whole world. We have great faith in them because they provide the best and most advanced health care, not just in Canada but probably around the globe.

I think this is an important bill. It's an important issue, to create awareness about safety in the workplace. That's why we debate this issue all the time, because all of us, from both sides, care about it. We care about the safety of everyone, not just health care workers but anyone who commits himself or herself to serve the community, especially in the health care field.

I'm here to listen for more comments, and hopefully in the end we will create awareness, not just among ourselves but also send a great message to all the people of this province.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): It's a pleasure to stand this morning and speak in support of Bill 30, brought forward by the member from Nickel Belt, the Safe Needles Save Lives Act, and to compliment her on the work she does in the Legislature, her strong advocacy on many issues, especially health care.

I welcome the members in the gallery who have supported her and helped her bring forward this legislation for the second time. Welcome to politics. It takes a while sometimes to get things done, but we all try to do the right things for the communities in private members' bills. As my colleague from Waterloo–Wellington mentioned, it is a non-partisan type of morning where we can bring forward issues that we could all benefit from.

We certainly support the legislation and did support it before when it was brought forward. From a personal perspective, I was actively a nurse for 20 years. I still have my licence. You never know in politics; you may have to go back to a former profession. There's not a lot of job security. I still have my licence and am still in quite close contact with many of my nursing colleagues.

The member from Nickel Belt certainly also personally understands the importance of the concept of safe needles and protection for our health care professionals, protecting our front-line workers. You're always surprised. I worked in the industry 20 years before there was any type of safety-engineered needles, back in the old days, and I saw the evolution of technologies as they advanced and what we can do. The technology is there; we just need to do some more active regulations to enforce it so we can protect everyone.

The provinces have been mentioned, and the US, that have already brought in this type of legislation to protect workers. It's surprising that Ontario is as behind as it is, but that's why we're here. That's why the member from Nickel Belt has been a strong advocate and why we are also supporting this bill before you today.

It's obvious that nurses in the field are in direct contact, but sometimes you forget the doctors who are involved, the nurse assistants, the health care aides, the people in training in programs, and of course you forget the hospital staff: the janitors, the cleaning crews, the volunteers, the auxiliaries who are in the hospitals work-

ing alongside the health care professionals. They are all in contact. Yesterday we had the Ontario firefighters' association here. So I think we should include emergency medical personnel, paramedics, firefighters, police services, professionals and people who are simply just trying to care for others who are in need of care. This would help protect us all.

I know that the Ontario Nurses' Association had some interesting statistics. Annually, there are 33,000 needle-stick injuries that occur in the health care sector alone; 17,000, of course, occur in the acute care sector, which is the sector that I worked in. The cost associated with needle-stick injury—it's all part of education; we're educating the public—is \$2,000 in testing and treatment, although for those suffering from the seriousness of deadly disease, the costs far exceed that. But it also includes the patients. So if a needle stick occurs, the health care worker or whoever has been stuck gets all the blood work etc., but patient also has to go through the blood work and all the process that's involved. Because we have the technology, we should be using it. The estimate in Ontario alone is that \$66 million is spent every year on workers who have needle-stick injuries.

It's interesting. You get caught up in a lot of big headlines in the health care industry, and yes, there's not enough funding and it needs to be changed, and accessibility to health care—you can go on and on. This is something that, sure, is going to cost something, but the costs are definitely worth it, and it's protecting our health care workers. They don't need another reason to leave the system. We need front-line health care providers, and there are things we can do that show that they are appreciated, they're respected, that we want to protect them and we want to work with them. This is an example of one of the things we can do.

Ms. Martel has been an excellent advocate on health care issues, in her tenacity in sticking with this—don't mind the pun; we try to have a little humour in politics—to see this go through. The political process, say, to bring this to committee to debate, whichever way possible—the government has that ability to call this bill any time they want to and to get it out to committee to discuss, to hear from all sides. We see that the sides that are here today are supportive. If we're missing something, then that's the time it's brought forward.

How do we best implement it? You have to work with the health care system. Some of the other provinces, as was mentioned earlier, are at certain stages. At least they're in stages. At least they're working; at least they are going in that direction.

The bill provides awareness. The bill provides protection. We need to prevent these injuries from happening, and we have the heightened responsibility to do this. As I say, it's a small cost. It's what should be done. My colleague from Waterloo–Wellington mentioned long-term-care facilities. I think that you really have to educate the public, and it's becoming more so. They have the patient councils in long-term-care centres. Make as many people aware of the issues as you can, because public pressure is

what drives us to bring in bills that are going to protect all of us. Again, it's the awareness, the moving it along this process. I always say that in nursing things moved a lot quicker than they do in politics. You have to develop a whole new level of patience, but you get there. You figure out how to work within the system. I know Ms. Martel will soon be 20 years in the Legislature. She certainly has learned to work the process, the legislation, and knows how to get things done. I support the bill brought forward by her today.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member for—

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): Beaches–East York.

The Deputy Speaker: I just had a block on that. Beaches–East York.

Mr. Prue: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure and an honour to speak to this bill here today, but before I actually deal with the merits of the bill, I would like to comment on some of the statements that were made by my learned friends opposite. There were two in particular when they spoke, and, keeping in the same vein as my colleague from Parkdale–High Park, quotes came instantly to mind.

To the member from London–Fanshawe, I'm reminded first of all of Goethe. His most famous quote, at least the one I like best: What is the hardest thing for a man to see? That which is right before his very eyes.

So there it is. He questioned the definition: What was a sharp? You need go no further than the actual bill. It defines what a medical sharp is in very plain, although technical, language. It means "a needle device or any non-needle sharp used for withdrawing body fluids, accessing an artery or vein, administering medications or other fluids, or any other use resulting or likely to result in parenteral contact." It may be kind of hard language, but it's there. That's the definition; that's what is included.

1050

To my friend from Nipissing, who was going on and on about the costs, again I go back to quotes. I love quotes, as members of the Legislature know, and one of my favourite ones is from Oscar Wilde in describing a businessman—I think one he particularly detested—and he quoted the guy as someone who knows the cost of everything but the value of nothing. That's what I would suggest to my friend from Nipissing. "How much is this going to cost?" she asked. How much is going to be involved from the treasury? The reality is that the value of what is being done here is not so much in terms of the costs that are going to be expended or saved but the value in the life of the people we are going to save, the value of the work that they do, and the obligation we have to each and every one of them to ensure that their workplace safety is maintained.

I started with those two quotes. I'd like to throw back to the Liberals a quote that, every time it's used in this Legislature, all I see is applause from the opposite bench, whether it be from the Premier or from Minister Bountro-

gianni, who is in charge of intergovernmental affairs. They always say that Ontarians are being shortchanged, that the federal formulas don't work, and that if you're a worker in Ontario you don't get the same monies or the same privileges as if you were a worker in any other province, especially if you're laid off, if you're on unemployment insurance, and why is it that we get less in Ontario? I would ask the same question. I hope you'll all applaud me. I'm going to ask exactly the same thing. Is it fair that a worker in Ontario has less protection than an identical worker in most other provinces of Canada? You have to ask yourself that question if you're going to be totally fair. If you're going to applaud the Premier for asking the question, you should applaud anyone else who asks the same question. Is it fair for these workers to have less protection than if they worked in Saskatchewan or Manitoba or British Columbia or Alberta or Nova Scotia? The answer is very simple: It is not fair.

All that is being asked here is that a five-step process be undertaken:

(1) That there be mandatory adoptions of safety-engineered devices. That's not that difficult. Just do it.

(2) That there should be an exposure control plan so that if these objects are available, if they're in the hospitals, if they're in the care centres, there be an exposure control plan to make sure that they are not taken out or used more often than not and that the people who use them are careful.

(3) That there has to be effective training and education, which has been done in Toronto East General Hospital, which I'm going to deal with in a minute.

(4) There needs to be a sharps injury log kept.

(5) There needs to be post-exposure protocol so that we know how to follow up and how to remedy all of that.

In the two minutes I have left, I'd like to talk about Toronto East General Hospital. That is my hospital. It's in my community. It's in Beaches–East York. We're very proud of it. It's a very innovative place.

There is a study written by Laura Visser in the *Health-care Quarterly*, volume 9, number 1, in 2006, and it talks about Toronto East General Hospital. I'd just like to quote a little bit from this. It says:

"Since the safety program was started at TEGH, sharps injuries have declined by 80%, easily surpassing the original first year goal of a 20% reduction in injuries. There were 41 reported injuries in 2003, decreasing to eight in 2004. This included the complete elimination of injuries during blood collection procedures for that year."

It goes on to quote Rob Devitt, who is the hospital's president and CEO, saying what a wonderful thing it is. But I think the important aspect is what has happened since then. The author goes on to write:

"Encouraged by this success, TEGH has now extended the program to include a needleless IV system, along with IV catheters and more portable sharps disposal containers. It is also now investigating the introduction of safety-engineered scalpels and blades to address sharps injuries in the operating room."

The will is there. What it needs is legislation so that the Toronto East General Hospital is not the only place

where this occurs. It needs to happen in every hospital, in every doctor's office, in every health care facility and in every long-term-care facility. The workers deserve the protection; the bill will make it happen.

I congratulate my colleague from Nickel Belt for bringing forward this bill and having the tenacity to bring it forward again. I ask the members opposite not to use excuses but common sense to make sure it proceeds.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): First, let me welcome to the Legislature the front-line workers from the Ontario Nurses' Association, the Service Employees International Union and the Ontario Public Service Employees Union.

On private member's Bill 30 by the member from Nickel Belt, An Act to reduce the incidence of needle-stick injuries, I want to remind our viewers that this is private members' hour. That means we are not constrained by government policy or by a government program, and we're certainly not being told how to vote in private members' hours. I will most likely support this bill, depending on how the member from Nickel Belt answers three of my concerns.

First, the good news. As all of us know, in March 2005, the Ministry of Health announced an investment already—this is very proactive, in a way—of \$11.6 million for hospitals to purchase safety-engineered medical devices. This was identified as one-time special funding, as we know, to improve the health and safety of the province's health care workers by investing in safer medical equipment and safety-engineered medical devices at all Ontario hospitals.

My question to the member for Nickel Belt is, did she consult the following groups: stakeholders from groups such as doctors in private practice, dentists or others who may be affected by this bill and who would likely have concerns, as was said before, that it is very expensive? And does it allow the flexibility to address hazards in a manner proportional to this risk?

Second, if this bill proceeds, will there be consultations? Has the member consulted with health sector stakeholders, such as the health regulatory colleges, health professional associations, the Ontario Association of Medical Laboratories and the Ontario Hospital Association?

Third, my final question: Neither the Ministry of Labour nor the Ministry of Health have a reliable estimate of the expected upfront costs or of possible savings to the health care system through reduced injuries to workers, such as lost time, WSIB costs, retraining costs and so on. Please note that the Toronto East General Hospital implemented the safety-engineered medical devices program between 2001 and 2005. We saw an 80% to 85% drop in sharps injuries—congratulations—but the increased cost for the safety devices varied between an 83% increase, from almost \$1 to \$1.68, for IV catheters, and a 1,200% increase, between 2 cents to 26 cents per unit, for injectable needles.

The member from Parkdale-High Park made a good point, and that is, this is not only an issue that concerns

hospitals or health care workers as such, because many times, I know in my office, we get calls on syringes in back lanes. Good point. If members of the public want to know, "Who do you call if you see a syringe that your kid picks up on the road, on the street or in the back lane?" you call the police or the health department.

Finally, I want to simply remind you of this, which is a good point: The technology exists to produce safe devices. That, to me, is an important item.

I want to congratulate the member from Nickel Belt for bringing Bill 30 forward.

1100

The Deputy Speaker: Ms. Martel, you have two minutes to respond.

Ms. Martel: I want to acknowledge the presence of Leah Casselman, president of OPSEU, in the gallery.

I want to say to the member for Nipissing, the bill doesn't say that we're going to have these devices in all workplaces all at once. It says, very clearly, "prescribed workplaces." It can be done by regulation in a staged approach. Secondly, she talked about what kind of sharps. It says "as approved by Health Canada" right in the bill, so you're not going to be using just anything from anybody. I forget her third concern, but I'm sure we can deal with it at committee.

Who did I consult with? These folks here, those workers up there, the people who are most at risk every day in their workplace of getting a needle-stick injury. That's who I consulted with, that's who I have been working with for the last two years, because they deserve to be protected, and we deserve to have a law in Ontario that protects them. I'm very proud of my work with these groups and with the Alliance for Sharps Safety and Needlestick Prevention. Anybody else who we want to consult with, we can do that at public hearings once we get the bill to public hearings.

The reality is this: On July 26, 2006, four union leaders who represent the majority of workers who are impacted by needle-stick injuries wrote to the Premier, the Minister of Health and the Minister of Labour and said this was a priority for them. They said, "Where is Ontario?" Your government has inspected health care workplaces, studied the situation since your election, and provided limited, one-time funding in 2005 to help hospitals purchase safety-engineered sharps. The money ran out in March 2006. What your government has not done yet is require the use of this equipment and thus reduce or eliminate preventable injuries to nurses and other health care workers.

The Minister of Labour responded in the same way that I knew the government members would today: "We set up a committee of health care workers, and we're going to look at it there." And do you know what he said? "The use of safety-engineered medical devices could"—could—"be a topic of discussion for this committee." The time for "could" is over. It's time now to have a bill in place to protect these workers. Five other jurisdictions in Canada have moved to protect workers from needle-stick injuries. We need to do that in Ontario. This should be the law in Ontario.

LANDFILL

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Minister of the Environment must confirm that the region impacted by the Green Lane landfill purchase is a “willing host”; and

That the government of Ontario must guarantee that the landfill will not be in operation after the current scheduled closing date of 2018; and

That the city of Toronto, acting as a “good neighbour,” must develop a comprehensive plan to ensure that the necessary policies and technologies are adopted and in place so that, as of January 1, 2012, the city of Toronto will no longer dispose of any waste at the Green Lane landfill site.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Miller has moved private member’s notice of motion number 31. Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr. Miller, you have up to 10 minutes.

Mr. Miller: I’m pleased to rise today to speak about this very important resolution. Ontario is facing a waste crisis under the McGuinty Liberals, and we in the Ontario PC caucus believe it is time we had a debate surrounding waste.

Before I outline vital steps this government should take in terms of Green Lane, I’d like to express my disappointment with the Liberal members from the London area. There are no fewer than five Liberal members who represent the ridings surrounding the Green Lane landfill. Two are ministers, and one actually represents the riding where the landfill site sits. Of these five members, only two asked the Minister of the Environment softball questions on Green Lane. Not once did we in this House hear from any of these five members when Green Lane was allowed to increase their capacity in June 2006. Not once did we hear from these members when the city of Toronto surprised us all by buying the dump.

One voice heard from is the Oneida of the Thames River. On November 9, 2006, the *Globe and Mail* reported that the area native band is voicing its concerns over Toronto’s garbage, and that they are looking into their options with lawyers in Toronto. The article states, “Oneida Chief Randall Phillips said he is hoping for cooperative negotiation with the city, which is scheduled to take possession on December 20. He said the band will wait no later than January before considering other tactics.”

It goes on to say, “Standing at his reserve’s town line yesterday, Mr. Phillips and other council members swatted at flies and pointed to the nearby dump. The stench eased up as the heavy early-morning fog lifted, but there was no mistaking the smell of garbage that reserve residents say plagues the Oneida’s land.”

I don’t envy those five government members. They’ll have some explaining to do to the people of London and the surrounding areas. They’ll have to be accountable for their lack of action or representation. Today’s resolution provides those five members of provincial Parliament with an opportunity to rebuild trust with their constituents.

This resolution simply seeks to ensure that some of the most basic protections that the Ministry of the Environment should have provided from the outset are indeed provided.

The first thing we want to ensure for those families who live in the area surrounding the Green Lane landfill is that they are a willing host. The concept of willing host is something that the Liberals once said they believed in. Of course, they once said they believed in a lot of things in order to get elected. Dalton McGuinty, their leader, was very clear when it came to willing hosts. In fact, he tabled a similar resolution to the one I introduced today. On October 2, 2000, Dalton McGuinty rose in the Legislature and said the following:

“Be it resolved that the Ontario Legislature demand that the Minister of the Environment use the statutory powers entrusted to him to prevent the creation or operation of a waste management facility at the Adams mine site in Kirkland Lake until the following conditions are met: a full environmental assessment has determined that there will be no negative impact on the region’s groundwater; and the residents of the region confirm through referenda that they are in fact a willing host for the shipment of waste to their community.”

That is what Dalton McGuinty said then. Flash forward to today, and we have no referenda and no debate.

The five provincial representatives who should be asking questions have failed their constituents, and because of that failure, we do not know if the region surrounding Green Lane landfill is indeed a willing host.

The resolution today takes a more balanced approach in terms of the willing host. We simply call on the Minister of the Environment to have the discussion, do the consultations and prove to the people of southwestern Ontario, Toronto and the province as a whole that the impacted region is willing to accept the shipment of Toronto’s garbage: a simple request and, quite frankly, something that should have been done before the sale was even allowed.

The second aspect of the resolution calls for a guarantee from the minister that the Green Lane landfill will cease to operate after 2018. The people of southwestern Ontario have an enormous environmental burden thrust upon them with no clear expression of interest. We in the Ontario PC caucus believe that the least this Liberal government can do is give the people of the London area an assurance that they will not be a dump forever and that there is indeed a guaranteed light at the end of Dalton McGuinty’s garbage crisis tunnel.

The third and final piece of the resolution is arguably the most important because it speaks to working with the city of Toronto to find a way for them to deal with their own waste. John Tory believes, and I agree, that fundamentally Torontonians want to deal with their own waste. They want the days of their garbage travelling down the 401 to become someone else’s problem to be over, and, until that day, they want to act as a good neighbour. The people of Toronto want to be a good neighbour by reducing their waste and finding new ways to utilize it. I

know they care about the environment, and reducing waste is the right thing to do.

The great news is that this is possible. The possibilities are endless if the province is willing to be a partner with the city of Toronto. What can we do? Take immediate, bold action. John Tory is in favour of looking at all of the new and innovative technologies that the rest of the world seems to have adopted to turn waste into energy. Newly elected Toronto mayor David Miller, in his victory speech on Monday, emphasized that he wants to see a 70% diversion rate for the city of Toronto by 2010—an admirable and ambitious goal. If we can take ideas like these and put them into action, we can begin to see significant progress.

Personally, I have a keen interest in what we can achieve through greater product stewardship. In 2005, I introduced a private member's bill which essentially called for a version of bottle return as well as a greater role for product stewardship in terms of how we manage our waste. Product stewardship works because industry comes up with the solutions. They know their business best and will come up with solutions that are cost-effective and get the job done. Deposit-return systems work because there is an incentive to return the product for the deposit, and those who end up not returning it are in fact paying for the system; the polluters pay. Of course, the Liberal government has announced something that seems to try and look like a bottle-return plan; however, the flaws in that policy by photo op are best left for another day and another debate.

1110

In terms of better dealing with our waste, we can also learn from other jurisdictions around the world. I mentioned earlier that John Tory supports looking at advanced technologies, such as energy from waste, that are being used across the world. But it isn't just energy from waste. There are best practices to be found in many countries, such as Sweden. There's an area in southern Sweden which has so many advanced ways of diverting and dealing with waste that at the end of the day, less than 10% ends up in a landfill. The Swedish Parliament has established 15 environmental quality objectives, such as clean air and good-quality groundwater, to guide Sweden towards a sustainable society. The 15 environmental objectives will function as benchmarks for all environment-related development in Sweden, regardless of where it is implemented and by whom. The overriding aim is to solve all the major environmental problems within one generation. Sweden is taking bold steps, with definite deadlines, and they are seeing real results. The Ontario Liberals could learn from that example.

By encouraging the city of Toronto to act as a good neighbour and to work towards stopping the shipment of waste to Green Lane by 2012, we are proposing a deadline, one that is close enough that the people in and around Green Lane can take some comfort in knowing that their concerns have been heard and acted on, but also far enough away that the city of Toronto can realistically make the necessary changes to meet the deadline.

If the city of Toronto were to succeed in this task, it would be a win-win-win situation. The city would win because it will finally accomplish a goal that residents and politicians alike have wanted to achieve for years. The people in the area surrounding Green Lane will win the right to breathe a little deeper when they go to get their paper in the morning. Finally, the province of Ontario will win because it will have drastically decreased the amount of waste going to landfill.

In conclusion, I want to make a few items perfectly clear. This resolution calls for three simple things: proof that the region surrounding Green Lane landfill is a willing host; a guarantee that Green Lane landfill will cease to operate after 2018; and, finally, a call for the city of Toronto to work towards stopping shipments to Green Lane by 2012, all the while acting as a good neighbour. This resolution respects the rights and jurisdiction of the city of Toronto, which we know wants to move towards dealing with its waste. Finally, this resolution gives a voice to those who have had the misfortune of having five silent members as their representatives.

This is an important resolution and I look forward to seeing our friends in the Liberal caucus supporting it, especially the members from the London area.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It's a pleasure for me to have the opportunity to spend a few minutes this morning talking about this particular situation in southwestern Ontario.

First of all, I would like to get a few remarks on the record based on some letters I have here. The first one I have is from James McIntyre, the mayor of the township of Southwold, which is the location of the landfill site. It says:

"Attention: Mayor David Miller....

"Through various media sources, the township of Southwold understands that Toronto council has authorized proceeding with the acquisition of the Green Lane landfill located within the corporate limits of township and county of Elgin.

"It is further understood that the city of Toronto has provided assurances to media outlets and to the city of London that it intends to work with affected municipalities in ensuring that the public interests, benefits and objectives respecting waste transport and disposal are met.

"On behalf of our municipality, we welcome these initiatives and look forward to an initial meeting and discussions with representatives of the city as the matter of acquisition progresses."

This is signed by James McIntyre, the mayor of the township of Southwold.

A letter back to the township regarding this matter:

"Thank you for your letter of November 3, 2006. In order to meet your requested response date of November 10, I am responding on behalf of the city....

"Toronto is intending to acquire only the landfill itself, but not the collection operations, so the obligations assumed by Toronto will relate to disposal. Having said that, it has always been the city's intention, assuming it

reaches an agreement with the vendor, to accept waste as provided under all current municipal waste collection contracts with Green Lane and to work with local municipalities for the life of the landfill. Toronto also intends to meet existing commitments related to the Green Lane community trust fund and will, of course, respect all the terms and conditions of the certificate of approval.

"We would be happy to meet with representatives of Southwold as we proceed with the acquisition, which we hope will be completed on February 1, 2007."

Indeed, my five colleagues from this area have, on numerous occasions, been meeting with municipal officials in Southwold and certainly working with them, spearheaded, of course, by my colleague the Minister of Labour, the Honourable Steve Peters, the member from Elgin—Middlesex—London.

To look at a number of options, the current government has made some changes to the EA process to look at some alternatives for handling waste management. Indeed, Rod Bryden in Ottawa has a pilot project with plasma gasification to see how that will work in terms of handling waste management. We've made some changes to the EA process to allow those pilot projects to move forward and collect the data, and to make sure that any emissions from these operations meet the air quality standards in the province of Ontario, which are among the highest in the world. Indeed, if these alternative technologies prove successful through the pilot projects, they will then be subject to the full environmental assessments that we go through in Ontario to provide waste management approaches.

My friend from Parry Sound—Muskoka mentioned Sweden. Just recently, I had the opportunity to review a comprehensive report done by the federal government in Sweden looking at waste management. Of course, in that jurisdiction, landfilling is the last of the three options that they pursue.

The Ministry of the Environment is certainly working on product stewardship. Mr. Speaker, you're just recently a new grandfather, and you will inevitably be buying a number of gifts for that new grandchild. And when you look at the product—I've had this experience myself—the toy you get, it's about that large, and the packaging is about this large. Often it's those blister packages, which are made of material that is not recyclable, or the cardboard in that package is of a material that can't be recycled. So inevitably, that goes into a landfill site.

We have announced just recently—it will occur early in 2007—an opportunity through Brewers Retail to have a deposit-return system in place for bottles that are sold with various spirits and wines through the LCBO system. We know that the Brewers Retail is probably the most successful recycling operation in North America. We know that the participation rate, the return of bottles to that organization, is some 96% to 97%. We're certainly hoping, as we put the final details in place for the LCBO return, that individuals will take the opportunity to recycle wine and spirit bottles.

I know that's been welcomed by AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. I just had the oppor-

tunity yesterday to talk to Doug Reycraft, who is the new president of AMO, and he certainly is very supportive of that decision and that approach, as municipalities have been struggling for a long time. Not only does it create workplace problems for individuals collecting material, because often blue boxes get shuffled around, bottles get broken and employees have to pick them up, but there hasn't been, over a long period of time, a real market for those bottles. Inevitably, they end up in landfills or they become part of asphalt.

I just got the signal and I'm going to conclude, but I wanted to get those remarks on the record dealing with this particular issue.

1120

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I rise to speak in support of the motion brought forward by my colleague. I'm happy to speak to the resolution, but I'm really somewhat concerned that the resolution is necessary. Had this process been followed appropriately, in my mind, this resolution would not have been necessary. The process of approving landfill sites and the Environmental Assessment Act and the process of approving expansions relate to waste management in general, not just whether it's a good place to put the garbage.

First of all, I just want to go to the first part of the resolution: "That, in the opinion of the House, the Minister of the Environment must confirm that the region impacted by the Green Lane landfill purchase is a 'willing host.'" I just quickly wanted to touch on that. It's important to recognize the word "region." For those watching who are not aware of where the Green Lane landfill site is—I see the government side shaking their heads, but they definitely know where it is—it's right on the edge. It is in Southwold township, in Elgin county, but in fact it's right on the edge of the city of London. As you drive down the 401—and I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, you go by there on a regular basis—you will find that the interchange going into London is right on the corner of where the Green Lane landfill site is located. That is important, because I think it's important to recognize that the region and the host area that's going to take the waste from Toronto is aware and is accepting of that fact.

I recognize that the approval was granted and the expansion is there, so it's not the city of Toronto that has inappropriately purchased the landfill site. The problem is that the Ministry of the Environment, in their approval process, did not do due diligence to make sure that they knew what they were approving it for. When the news came out in the newspaper about the purchase by the city of Toronto, there were a lot of comments from the local members of the area, including, I see here with us, the member from London—Fanshawe. All the comments were, "But this doesn't mean we're going to get Toronto waste here. Of course I will do everything I can"—I think this was the statement, and the member across can correct me if I'm wrong—"to stop it from happening, but I'm not sure I can do anything." That was the comment that was in my local paper, called the London Free Press, and I think it covers the same area that the member is from.

That's really the problem here. That situation would not have arisen had the city of Toronto had to go through that process on their own to get that expansion. I think it's important to recognize, as we deal with that expansion and the approval process, that in 2005 the city of Toronto was also approached about purchasing or utilizing the Green Lane landfill site, and they decided it wasn't for them. They decided not to do that. They made other arrangements. Of course this year, when they were approached again, they decided they liked the idea, so they bought the site. One has to ask, what changed between the 2005 and the 2006 process? We realize what changed was that the minister had approved a large expansion for the landfill site, so all of a sudden it looked more appealing to the city of Toronto. I think that would be why they purchased it.

We also know that had the city of Toronto purchased it themselves in 2005 and had to go through the environmental process, they would have had to deal with their total waste management plan. They would have had to commit to the amount of waste that would be removed from the waste stream. They would have had to look at alternative ways of disposing of their waste before they could get approval to expand the site. They would have had to go through that in the environmental assessment. While they were doing that, they also would have had the public involved to talk about waste diversion, to talk about the other alternatives for waste disposal, but of course none of that was required when the operator or the owner of the landfill site prior to Toronto went for the application. Of course, that's when the government should have been addressing it. The minister approved the expansion of the landfill site, and at that time the members were all quoted as suggesting they didn't know it was being done for Toronto waste, that this was just an expansion for one of our local landfill sites. I find that hard to believe.

The expansion, the permit, is for 10 million tonnes of waste—somebody applying for an expansion to deposit 10 million tonnes of waste. I think the minister would have to look around and find out why someone would want that size of an expansion. Of course, the minister would immediately see that there is only one municipality in the province of Ontario that would generate that amount of waste that would require that expansion.

The member for Elgin–Middlesex–London, the member for London–Fanshawe and the members for London North and London West would all, at that point, have been aware that this application was coming through, that there was an approval process the minister was dealing with. Two of those members were, of course, sitting at the cabinet table with the Ministry of the Environment as these types of decisions were made.

To put it in context, in 1999 those municipalities—Elgin and Middlesex counties and the city of St. Thomas and that area—produced 30,000 tonnes of waste, and the minister approved this expansion for, as I said, 10 million tonnes. If it wasn't for the city of Toronto garbage, the minister-approved capacity in this landfill site would last

333 years for the present users before that space would be occupied. They would have landfill space until the year 2339. That's how much capacity was there. So I think it's unreasonable to assume that the minister thought that's what the approval was for.

I don't think that, realistically, the minister approved it for that purpose. I suppose that, in the news release announcing the expansion, the minister said it was good news for municipalities "that are seeking disposal capacity within the province rather than sending it to Michigan." So I guess, if we look around now at the municipalities that are sending their waste to Michigan, we'll find that there is only the main one, of course the city of Toronto, and some of the 905 municipalities that are sending some there. I think it would be very difficult to assume that the members representing that area, who at the time said the expansion had nothing to do with Toronto waste, said later on, "Oh, my gosh, if we'd known this, we wouldn't have let it happen." I find it hard to fathom that, when you look at those figures.

The member for London North said, "Where we have waste, let's look for the most environmentally sensible place to put it. Green Lane is as good as any, I understand." Again, it is kind of hard to relate that to, "We are opposed and we will do whatever we can to stop it from going there," when we have resigned ourselves to the fact that there it is going to go.

It's important to recognize that a municipality that applies for an expansion has to study more than whether the site is safe. As I said, they have to look at all the other alternatives to get rid of their waste, and not just where it is going to be buried.

If Toronto had gone through the process, the fact that the McGuinty Liberals had not lived up to their 60% diversion or recycling promise would have been highlighted, because obviously they would have had to show how much waste they were going to divert from the waste stream and they immediately would have seen, and the public immediately would have seen, that they were never going to need it.

Also in a recent poll, 60% of Torontonians believe that they should be looking after their own waste. Again, that is why I think it is so important that the resolution have a timeline on it.

The member for London–Fanshawe actually questioned why the city of Toronto isn't exploring new technologies to deal with their waste. He said, "Why haven't they already done that?" I agree with the member from London–Fanshawe, and I think he, as a member of the government, should have been forcing the city of Toronto to look at that, as opposed to sitting back and watching this happen and not telling anyone about it. If Toronto had gone through the proper process, if the Liberals hadn't created the back-door way to avoid it, then perhaps we would have had an energy-from-waste pilot project right here in Toronto now. We will never know. The answer is that the Liberal Minister of the Environment has made it so that they don't have to. That's why I object to this landfill decision and I support the resolution on behalf of my fellow member.

1130

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): It's a pleasure for me to participate in this debate at this time. Today's private member's motion, if nothing else, confirms that irony is alive and well in Ontario, because we have a motion before us that has been introduced by the opposition Tories that, among other things, requires the Minister of the Environment to determine whether or not London and its surrounding area is a willing host to Toronto's garbage. If that sounds familiar to some members in this House, it should, because in substance it mirrors a Liberal opposition motion that was advanced in October 2000 which sought to ensure a community receiving a another community's garbage is a "willing host."

We've heard the text of the Conservative motion today, but I want to read into the record the Liberal opposition motion from October 2000 for the benefit of those communities that are facing massive dump expansions courtesy of the McGuinty Liberals. This is a quote from Mr. McGuinty, October 2000:

"I have an opposition day motion which reads as follows:

"Be it resolved that the Ontario Legislature demand that the Minister of the Environment use the statutory powers entrusted to him to prevent the creation or operation of a waste management facility at the Adams mine site in Kirkland Lake until the following conditions are met: a full environmental assessment has determined that there will be no negative impact on the region's groundwater; and the residents of the region confirm through referenda that they are in fact a willing host for the shipment of waste to their community;

"Be it further resolved that the Ontario Legislature demand that the Minister of the Environment keep his promise not to extend the operating licence of the Keele Valley landfill site."

Back on October 2, 2000, when this motion was introduced, Dalton McGuinty had this to say about one community exporting its trash to another: "Our motion also calls for the residents of the region to have a say. We want a referendum to determine that they are in fact truly willing hosts." That's from Hansard, October 2, 2000.

I want to read into the record as well some further information that talks about "willing host." This comes from comments that were made by Premier McGuinty at the time that his colleague the member from Timiskaming, now the Minister of Natural Resources, introduced a private member's bill also talking about "willing host." This is what the now Premier had to say with respect to the idea or the principle of a willing host. It's a long quote, but I want to read it all into the record:

"The second principle the bill embraces is that of a willing host, and I guess there's some looseness with respect to the definition of a willing host. The principle here is that no community can be compelled against its wishes to take another community's waste. I think that is eminently supportable as well. It's one thing to have to take responsibility for your own garbage, for your own

waste, but it's quite another to have to assume responsibility for someone else's.

"In the former case," said Mr. McGuinty, "where you are required to assume responsibility for your own garbage, your own waste, it's only right and fitting and just and all those good things, and there is a real obligation on the part of a community to take that kind of responsibility. It provides a real incentive to reduce the amount of waste you are producing within your community.

"But in the latter case, where a community is being asked to take in within its borders, within its boundaries, somebody else's waste, that's a different matter altogether. In that case, I would argue there is no obligation on that community to do so. Secondly, that very option being made available to the community which is getting rid of its garbage can act as a very real disincentive to reduction of waste production. It's only appropriate that in that case that community, that proponent which is asking that its garbage be sent elsewhere, seek the consent of the recipient community or willing host. That's only fair and reasonable," said Dalton McGuinty.

"The member puts forward that one way of ensuring we have a willing host is to hold a referendum. That is clearly a means by which we can determine whether or not the community is willing. He is not creating any kind of unfair burden. It's simply a majority of the members. With respect to this issue of how wide we ought to spread the net, who ought to be entitled to cast a vote in this referendum, that's a subject of some fair debate. But I don't see why that subject could not be addressed more fully at committee. I don't see it as something fatal. We hardly want to involve our American cousins in that kind of consideration. I don't think that was the member's intent. Surely we can all agree on that.

"In brief, what the member"—Mr. Ramsay—"is trying to do here is eminently supportable. The bill is sound. He's embracing a couple of principles which, in fairness, have been embraced by governments of all political stripes during the past 25 years or so, one of those principles being that if a community is going to receive waste from another community, it ought to do so of its own accord; it ought to be willing to take the garbage in. Otherwise, if not, we should not be able to compel it to do so."

"The second principle is that an environmental assessment ought to be heard in these kinds of cases where we're dealing with landfill sites. The member has a particular concern related to his own constituency, a very valid and legitimate concern. In that particular case, we're not talking about a small operation; we're talking about a very large operation. It's important that a full, complete environmental assessment be heard and that the community there be found to be truly willing to receive that waste. I have no reservation whatsoever in lending my full support to the member for his good work, as contained within this bill."

Extensive as it was, that is from the Premier, Mr. McGuinty, in support of a private member's bill that had been put forward by one of his own, the member from

Timiskaming—Cochrane, now the Minister of Natural Resources, with respect to a willing host, who was a willing host, and why a full environmental assessment was important on these matters.

This begs the question: Did the Premier—or the Minister of the Environment for that matter—ask the people of London and the communities surrounding the Green Lane landfill if they were in fact willing hosts? Second, did the Premier or the Minister of the Environment call a referendum in London and its surrounding communities to see if they were willing hosts? Not a chance. Instead, what the people of London and the surrounding communities got was a mega-landfill expansion based on a deficient environmental assessment that was started by the Harris Tories and rubber-stamped by the McGuinty Liberals—an environmental assessment process, by the way, that Dalton McGuinty while in opposition described as “gutted” by the Harris government. That can be found in Hansard on October 2, 2000.

1140

At the end of private members’ business today, we’re going to witness a rather bizarre spectacle whereby the opposition Tories will be supporting a motion that is substantially the same motion they voted against while in government, and the McGuinty Liberal government will be voting against a motion that is substantively the same as the one they introduced and supported in this House when they were in opposition. It’s been quite a morning.

Such a role reversal would be comic if it wasn’t for the communities across the province being forced to accept the environmental risks associated with the misguided waste management policies of the Harris-Eves Tories and now the broken waste diversion promises of the McGuinty Liberals.

The failure of Dalton McGuinty to live up to the waste diversion principles that he held so strongly in opposition and the promises he made during the election in 2003 is not funny to the citizens of London and the surrounding communities who have had a mega-expansion of the Green Lane landfill forced on them against their will.

It’s not funny to the residents in Carp, Ontario, also facing a massive landfill expansion, when Dalton McGuinty promised to ban the landfilling of organics but has done nothing about it.

The McGuinty government’s failure to keep its promise to divert 60% of waste from landfills is not funny to the residents of Sarnia and Warwick township who are now facing a proposed mega-expansion of the Watford landfill site by Waste Management Canada.

It’s not funny to the residents in communities that face the prospect of a new garbage incinerator springing up in their backyard thanks to the McGuinty government’s embracing of incineration and proposals to reform the Environmental Assessment Act to make incinerators easier to site.

The fact that less than 30% of waste is presently diverted from landfills, despite Dalton McGuinty’s promise to divert 60% by the end of 2007, is not funny to the people of Simcoe county who are now fighting a

mega-landfill known as site 41. It was just one month ago, on October 20, that the McGuinty government gave provisional approval to site 41 despite the fact that the aquifer under the proposed landfill has been scientifically shown to contain among the purest water on the planet. In fact, it turns out that the water under site 41 contains levels of two heavy metals that are five times lower than even 5,000-year-old Arctic ice. According to Bill Shotyk, director of the Institute of Environmental Geochemistry at the University of Heidelberg in Germany, one of two laboratories in the world that are capable of conducting such an analysis, the water under site 41 “could well be the cleanest groundwater on earth.” That was a quote by Bill Shotyk, the *Toronto Star*, April 6, 2006. The McGuinty government’s response: Approve a massive landfill directly over the aquifer.

In opposition, Dalton McGuinty had a lot to say about mixing garbage and water. For example, during the Adams mine debate he stated that “one would assume that the government would now move heaven and earth in an effort to protect Ontario’s water, in an effort to make sure that poison doesn’t get into the water in the first place. But instead of moving heaven and earth to protect our water, the Mike Harris government seems hell-bent on moving southern Ontario’s garbage up north in a scheme that does not go nearly far enough to protect our water.” That quote is from Hansard, October 2, 2000.

But now in government, it’s clear that the McGuinty plan is no plan: no plan to keep the election promise of 60% waste diversion across the province by the end of 2007, no plan to ban organics in landfills as promised, just mega-landfill expansions, new incinerators, and approval to pump the cleanest water on the planet out of an aquifer so that the resulting hole can be filled with garbage. Does that sound like the Adams mine?

New Democrats and those communities that are impacted across the province want action on waste diversion. We want action on reducing packaging and we want action to protect communities’ source water from contamination. What we don’t want is a rehashing of the failed waste management policies of the Tories now carried out under the McGuinty Liberals as a result of their broken election promises.

Speaker, it’s been a pleasure for me to participate in this debate.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London—Fanshawe): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the chance to speak on an important issue that is dear to my heart. I have spoken about this many different times on several occasions.

I heard the member from Parry Sound—Muskoka talk about the resolution. I know he is bringing this resolution forward not because he believes in it, but just to score a point for political gain. But we are here to debate a very important issue. I’ve said it before, I say it today and I will say it tomorrow: My thinking about waste is that we should deal with it in a modern way, where we use technology to deal with waste. Many different countries in Europe—Belgium, Sweden, the Netherlands—have already introduced great technology to deal with waste.

I want to tell the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, the member from Oxford and the member from Nickel Belt that my colleagues and I don't take this issue lightly. As you know, Mr. Speaker, many people went before me who are ministers of the crown. They know that so many applications, so many requests come to the ministries, especially the Ministry of the Environment. The Ministry of the Environment, or any ministry, has standards; they have requirements. Any person or any request that meets those requirements gets approval or gets a licence.

Specifically, we're talking about the Ministry of the Environment here. First, Green Lane has been in existence since 1978. That company has been a great neighbour to the municipality surrounding that site. They respect all the environmental rules and regulations on a daily basis. When they applied to increase their capacity to the Ministry of the Environment, I believe they went through very rigorous conditions and requirements. When they met those requirements, they got a licence to expand and increase their capacity.

I believe the Ministry of the Environment receives on a daily basis many requests in many different parts of the province from many different landfills in Ontario. They request an expansion, and not all these places get a licence or get permission to expand. But Green Lane got permission because they met all the requirements which had been put forward by the Ministry of the Environment. I believe there are very rigorous conditions, which they met.

Having said that, I don't believe the city of Toronto should send their garbage to Southwold, where Green Lane is, or to northern Ontario or to western Ontario or to eastern Ontario. I believe strongly that the city of Toronto should deal with their own waste, not bully any small municipality or send it to any spot in the province of Ontario, because they have the capacity, they have the potential, they have the financial ability to follow many cities in Europe which deal with their waste by technology.

What I've said many different times is that I'm against Toronto sending their garbage to the Green Lane landfill in the Southwold area. But as you know, Mr. Speaker, it's a private deal, done by a private company and the city of Toronto. This issue is totally a municipal issue. I cannot interfere in this capacity. As a matter of fact, I've talked to the municipalities many different times and I've told them, "I'm there to support you, for whatever you need me for and whenever you need me." I work with them closely on a daily basis. I'm still working with them. So when they need me to support them and support their actions, I'm there for them.

1150

I also sent a letter to the mayor of Toronto, David Miller. I urged him to change his direction, to pursue a different avenue, not to send the garbage to Southwold, to Green Lane. This is my position. This is our position, on this side of the House, to convince all the municipalities across Ontario to deal with their own waste within their own boundaries. It is very important to all of us in order to create harmony and peace between the

communities. We should work closely with them and help them to divert their own waste in a professional and modern way. I believe that Toronto is doing it. They reached an important target; it was almost 54% diversion. I know they have a rigorous goal to reach: about 70% by the year 2010.

I want to tell the members from Oxford and Parry Sound that we're not quiet about this issue. We want to urge the municipalities. We are supporting any way to help the municipalities deal with their own waste within their own boundary. As he knows, this issue is a municipal issue. This issue is done between a private company and the city of Toronto. We cannot interfere with any deal that goes between private to private, because we'll have a chaotic situation in the province of Ontario. If, every time a private company wants to do something and meets all the requirements—the legal requirements and the conditions and terms put up by any ministry—and we want to stop them because that isn't good for our political gain, that would be a chaotic situation.

Therefore, Green Lane applied to the Minister of the Environment and they met the conditions and terms which were set out by the ministry. That's why they granted the expansion. We don't know what is going on, whether this company is going to use it for their local area people or to host any different municipalities.

As a matter of fact, we went and talked to the municipalities. We met with the Southwold mayor—the honourable member from Peterborough mentioned his name several different times—and we talked to him. He told us that this Green Lane has been a great neighbour. They respect and honour all the terms and conditions set out by the ministry. They meet with them on a regular basis. The Oneida reserve, which is close by, also believes these conditions are being met and that the requirements that Green Lane is obligated to respect are being respected. That's why the Minister of the Environment gave them permission.

Before I finish I want to say that I still wish that the city of Toronto changed its direction to deal with their own waste within their own boundary because they have the financial capacity and the ability to be a leader in the province of Ontario.

I want to tell the mayor of Toronto—hopefully he's listening to me today or somebody will listen to me—that I hope he will not send their garbage to that area. It's not good for Toronto. It's not good for anyone. We don't want to keep burying garbage. We have to deal with it.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I'm pleased to stand in support of the resolution brought forward by the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka that "must confirm that the region" of London—this is what we're talking about—"impacted by the Green Lane landfill purchase is a 'willing host'; and

"That the government of Ontario must guarantee that the landfill will not be in operation after the current scheduled closing date of 2018."

It's been interesting to listen to the various debates this morning and to hear what Mr. McGuinty said on November 24, 2003, when he was Leader of the Oppos-

ition. Let me quote: "We are going to get serious about waste diversion in the province of Ontario"—Liberal platform, page 9 of Growing Strong Communities, in big, bold, promise-breaking, Liberal red ink. "We will divert 60% of waste from landfills within five years."

We asked the Minister of the Environment many times about what's happening with that 60% diversion rate. She said, "Well, there is a little bit of doubt. It is a very high hurdle." But they said they would do it in their platform and they didn't do it.

That leads us in part to the resolution that's before us here today. The member from Perth-Middlesex said, "You know, we have an amazing plan to meet that promise of 60% waste diversion." Well, where's the amazing plan? We've asked so many times, we're getting tired of waiting, and they're kind of saying, "Well, maybe it's not going to happen"—again, saying anything to get elected, breaking promises, but it doesn't seem to matter to them. I don't know if there's any other place in the world where keeping a promise means so little. Here the present Liberal government makes all these promises, but, "It's okay. We're not going to keep them. People will forgive us." Well, they shouldn't forgive you. You shouldn't have said it. You knew better. You're not giving municipalities the tools to work with, in this case, with waste diversion.

That's the situation today in the Green Lane landfill site near London. It's in the community of Southwold, where the Minister of Labour is the MPP—a minister sitting at the cabinet table where these decisions are made.

There's a press release right here from the Minister of the Environment. I was looking for a photo op; I couldn't find it, but I'm sure there has to be a photo op out there. This press release is dated June 28. It's promoting the fact that the Minister of the Environment has approved the expansion of landfill capacity of the Green Lane site. It says, "The expansion is good news for municipalities and businesses in Ontario who are seeking disposal capacity within the province rather than sending it to Michigan."

The line about Michigan is very interesting, in light of a few things. Firstly, I think it's no secret to anyone here which cities currently ship their garbage to Michigan. Secondly, in the approval letter, which I have over here, sent by the minister to the Green Lane group, the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London was also notified of this approval in the region. Thirdly, not so long after, we heard that Toronto city council approved the purchase of the Green Lane landfill site shortly after the minister made an agreement with Michigan to reduce its shipments of garbage. It's an interesting turn of events, and I thought it was important that we put that on the record. I'm wondering if the city of Toronto would have been interested in purchasing Green Lane prior to the expansion that was approved by the Minister of the Environment.

My colleague from Oxford mentioned what some of the Liberal members from the London area said in response to the Toronto purchase of Green Lane.

The member from London-Fanshawe, who just spoke, said, "I am willing to choose any path, legal path, whatever possible path to block it." Shortly afterwards in the same article, he said he's not sure if there's anything he can do to stop this deal.

I can see that some members of the McGuinty Liberal government are feeling helpless, so how do you think the residents of their communities are feeling? Well, they're feeling pretty darned helpless that Toronto trash is trumping their trash. Toronto votes trump all other votes for the McGuinty Liberals, I guess.

Today my colleague brought this forward to try to protect Ontario and all the hard-working, taxpaying residents of London and the surrounding areas. It will be interesting to see in just a few minutes how those members on the government side are going to vote on this.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Miller, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Miller: I'd like to thank the member from London-Fanshawe, the member from Nickel Belt, the member from Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, the member from Peterborough and the member from Oxford for contributing to the debate today.

The Liberal government members from the London area have been strangely quiet on issues regarding the Green Lane landfill.

This is what the Premier said, when he was in opposition, to do with the issue of a willing host. He said, "It's only appropriate that in that case that community, that proponent which is asking that its garbage be sent elsewhere, seek the consent of the recipient community or willing host. That's only fair and reasonable." That's Premier McGuinty.

He goes on: "It's important that a full, complete environmental assessment be heard and that the community there be found to be truly willing to receive that waste."

That was then; this is now.

I want to emphasize the three key intentions of this resolution for the members of this House. They're simple, really, and very important to the people of London: first, the concept of a willing host; second, a guarantee that Green Lane will cease to operate after 2018; third, an assurance from the city of Toronto to work toward ceasing shipments to Green Lane by 2012, while acting as a good neighbour.

This resolution respects the rights and jurisdictions of the city of Toronto. We understand that they want to move toward dealing with their waste. We know they care about the environment for all Ontarians. Finally, this resolution gives a voice to the people of London.

I'm surprised that not all of the London government members spoke to this resolution today. As they have in the past, they've been very quiet on the issues to do with Green Lane landfill site.

I hope that all my colleagues on all sides of this House will support this resolution.

The Deputy Speaker: The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

SAFE NEEDLES SAVE LIVES ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR L'UTILISATION
D'AIGUILLES SÛRES
POUR SAUVER DES VIES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We'll first deal with ballot item number 59, standing in the name of Ms. Martel.

Ms. Martel has moved second reading of Bill 30. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Speaker, I would ask that the bill be sent to the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

The Deputy Speaker: Ms. Martel has asked that the bill be sent to the standing committee on regulations and private bills. Agreed? Agreed.

LANDFILL

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We shall now deal with ballot item number 60, standing in the name of Mr. Miller.

Mr. Miller has moved private member's notice of motion number 31. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1201 to 1206.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour, please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	McMeekin, Ted	Ruprecht, Tony
Barrett, Toby	McNeely, Phil	Scott, Laurie
Brownell, Jim	Miller, Norm	Tascona, Joseph N.
Chudleigh, Ted	Mitchell, Carol	Wilson, Jim
Elliott, Christine	Munro, Julia	Yakubski, John
Hardeman, Ernie	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Zimmer, David
Hudak, Tim	Ramal, Khalil	
Leal, Jeff	Runciman, Robert W.	

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please stand and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Delaney, Bob	Levac, Dave	Marsales, Judy
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The Deputy Clerk (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 22; the nays are 3.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been dealt with, I do now leave the chair. The House will resume at 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1208 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WILLIAM BELL

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): It is my privilege to publicly acknowledge the many and important contributions to the community of Richmond Hill and to the province of Ontario by His Worship Mayor William Bell, who will retire from public office on November 30, 2006.

Mayor Bell has served our community with distinction for more than a quarter century, both as councillor and, for 18 of those years, as mayor, having been elected mayor of Richmond Hill in 1988. In addition to his many civic responsibilities, Mayor Bell has served as the chairman of the York region transportation and works committee, as honorary chair of the S'port for Kids Foundation, as honorary trustee of the York Central Hospital, and as honorary director of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind in York region. His principled and inspired leadership and genuine concern for the people of our community have been recognized and acknowledged by all levels of government, and I have considered it a privilege to work with him on behalf of our shared constituency.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Mayor Bell's wife, Jackie, and his two daughters, Julie and Kate, for their steadfast support of his public service. We recognize the many personal sacrifices they have made as a family for the benefit of the community their husband and father has served with such distinction.

On behalf of all members of the Ontario Legislature, I am pleased to extend to His Worship Mayor William Bell and his wife, Jackie, our gratitude for their service to Richmond Hill, to York region and to the province of Ontario. I know that all members of the Legislature will join me in extending our sincere best wishes for many years of health and happiness and for success in their future endeavours, whatever they may be.

OTTAWA SWIM CLUB

CLUB DE NATATION D'OTTAWA

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): On Friday, November 10, I had the privilege of presenting a grant for an organization that not only fosters the growth and well-being of youth in Orléans, but also sparks their competitive edge, fostering in them a sense of self-confidence.

At the Ray Friel complex in my riding, I presented a cheque for \$16,200 from the Ontario Trillium Foundation to the Ottawa Swim Club, a non-profit organization that provides an open and transparent swim environment where young people of all ages can develop their swimming ability. The goal of the club is to be the centre of excellence for competitive high-performance swimming in the Ottawa area. This type of competition instills in young people the importance of physical activity and leading an active lifestyle at a young age. Competing in a

sport like swimming shows how healthy living can help you to excel in other areas of life.

La Fondation Trillium de l'Ontario, organisme relevant du ministère de la Culture, reçoit chaque année du gouvernement 100 \$ millions provenant de l'initiative des casinos de bienfaisance de la province.

La fondation accorde des subventions aux organismes de bienfaisance et aux organismes sans but lucratif admissibles oeuvrant dans les secteurs des arts et de la culture, de l'environnement, des services sociaux et des sports et loisirs.

The grant that I presented on Friday will be used to provide training to coaches and swimmers, allowing them to compete at their very best. They will also purchase new exercise and monitoring equipment which will track the underwater performance of swimmers during competitions.

I was proud to present this grant to the Ottawa Swim Club and I look forward to attending their swim meets to cheer on our Orléans athletes.

TOM TAYLOR

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): I rise today to pay tribute to Tom Taylor, who is retiring this year as mayor of Newmarket.

Tom Taylor was first elected to Newmarket council in 1962. He has served as a town councillor and regional councillor and, for the last nine years, as the mayor of Newmarket. As councillor and mayor, he has always been ably supported by his wife, Kate, and their four children.

A founding director of York region Habitat for Humanity, Tom Taylor also served as the first chair of Housing York Inc., which operated more than 1,700 non-profit housing units.

Many of Tom Taylor's key struggles in public life have been to help manage the incredible growth of Newmarket while preserving the quality of life and of the environment for Newmarket residents. He has worked hard on many environmental concerns, including the Oak Ridges moraine, the Holland River, and fighting against pollution.

Tom may be retiring as mayor, but we all know that his commitment to the betterment of the lives of local residents as a private citizen will continue. On behalf of all of my constituents in York North, I would like to thank Tom for his service and dedication to the people of Newmarket. Congratulations on a job well done.

VISITORS

Mr. Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): I rise to recognize two people in the gallery, Mr. Terry Butt and Mr. Dave Cook. Mr. Dave Cook has written two books on the Dixie area, the most recent being *From Frozen Ponds to Beehive Glory*, which details in great accuracy the history of that area and is one of the great examples of community-building in Mississauga South. Mr. Butt is

with him today as the financier and the promoter of these books. Thank you for allowing me to introduce them to the House.

FIRST NATIONS CHILDREN

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I rise today to recognize and give thanks to a number of groups and organizations, of which there are so many in Oshawa, for a project recently completed.

Over a year ago I had the opportunity to meet with Treaty 7 Grand Chief Stan Beardy, where we discussed the opportunity to have organizations from Oshawa aid distressed youth in the Nishnawbe Aski Nation. Chief Beardy was deeply concerned that far too many First Nations children, especially in rural communities, had developed severe social problems at a very young age and were becoming severely troubled and/or distressed. He demonstrated that in many of these communities children are not often given the opportunity to participate in quality recreational activities because of the lack of resources and/or accessibility to equipment to take part. We agreed that if more access to recreational equipment was realized, this could go a long way in assisting the troubled youth in these communities.

My staff and I, and a large number of Oshawa organizations, worked hard over the summer and the fall. I'm glad to say we were able to send nearly a transport truck load of equipment to aid youth of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation and give them opportunities: hundreds and hundreds of pairs of skates, over 100 full sets of team hockey jerseys, sticks, pants, gloves, helmets, dozens of pieces of goalie equipment and numerous other sports equipment as well.

I would like to take this opportunity personally to thank Rockbrune Bros. Moving for moving the goods to the north, Dave and Jill and all at Crow's Sports for their hard work, the Oshawa Minor Hockey Association, the Oshawa Lady Generals and all the individual donors who contributed to such a great cause.

Lastly, remember, as I say in hockey: Never mind the luck. Give it your best and the luck will take care of itself.

LOUIS RIEL DAY

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): Today, November 16, is the day that people come from all across Ontario, the Metis people in particular, to celebrate Louis Riel Day here at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. Today, in spite of the rain, there were more than 100 people who showed up, and I'm proud to say that speakers came from all three parties to address that multitude.

The people who were there from the Metis associations talked about the struggles of a people that continue after more than 120 years and that there seems to be no end to the struggles and what is happening to them. The speakers talked about the injustices of the Metis going back 120 years, most famously, of course, of

Louis Riel, a learned and educated man, a man who wrote poetry, a man who was the father of his people, a man who is today recognized as a father of Confederation, and who was hanged. They talked about the fact that the Parliament of Canada denied him, in spite of the fact he was elected three times, an opportunity to take his seat. They talked about Ontario and this Legislature's role in putting a bounty on his head.

But they also talked about the present and about what is happening to the Metis people and the continuation of their struggle for aboriginal rights. I was most appalled to hear that Canada is one of only two nations on earth which have voted against the UN resolution on aboriginal rights. They are continuing to struggle, and we are all with them.

LIGHTHOUSE PROGRAM

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): At the beginning of November, I had the opportunity to visit one of the schools in my riding for another important announcement about education in the province of Ontario. Port Elgin-Saugeen Central School was named one of Ontario's Schools on the Move under the Ministry of Education's Lighthouse program. This is the second school in Huron-Bruce to receive this honour, joining St. James separate school in Seaforth, which was announced earlier this year. These schools were selected, along with 21 other Ontario elementary schools, for outstanding literacy and numeracy results over the past three years. These 23 schools will now play an important role in boosting student achievement across the province by sharing their best practices and strategies with other schools.

1340

The Ministry of Education has provided resources and support to all of these schools to assist in developing and sharing its unique lessons, materials and other resources with educators. Throughout the current school year, teachers from these schools will assist others across the province by delivering presentations, participating in model classroom programs and exchanging information during in-person visits and through virtual visits using Internet technology.

This program is one of the many that the McGuinty government is supporting in an effort to continually improve Ontario's once-faltering education system. Helping successful schools share their best practices with other schools across the province is part of this government's strategy to ensure that 75% of the students meet provincial standards in reading, writing and math by 2008.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Speaker: It's a little unorthodox, but I believe the member from Mississauga South made a slight mistake by not asking for unanimous consent or seeking a point of order to introduce somebody in the gallery. It ended up being a rotation. I seek unanimous consent to have the rest of the rotation back the way it should be.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is there unanimous consent to continue the rotation? Agreed.

KINDERGARTEN

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): Calling All Three-Year-Olds: This is the name of the kindergarten registration program created through a wonderful partnership by the Perth county health unit, their sister organization in Huron county, and both the Avon Maitland District School Board and the Huron Perth Catholic District School Board. It is entering into a second successful year.

Those of us who are parents know the incredible ability of our children to overcome challenges, most especially if these potential problems are caught as early as possible.

This creative joint program provides a free cognitive evaluation for all children registering for JK to determine areas in which they may need extra help. Moreover, parents are given contacts to community services where help can be found.

The Ontario government has invested a total of \$17.5 billion in education this year. Much of this has been targeted at early learning, ensuring that class sizes for children in kindergarten to grade 3 are limited to 20 students by 2007-08. I'm proud that both school boards are provincial leaders in this regard. Smaller class sizes build on the skills parents develop with their children at home. Teachers in smaller classes are able to give greater attention to each individual child, focusing on early literacy and numeracy skills, preparing them fully for further education.

I applaud the efforts and success of the Perth county health unit, our neighbours in Huron county and both the public and separate school boards which I share with my friend the member for Huron-Bruce. Combined with the groundbreaking investments of the Ontario government, we are together ensuring a brighter future for children in my riding.

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): Unlike the leader of the official opposition, who is still convinced that my riding is striving for one hospital when in fact we have three hospital redevelopment projects on the go, I believe in doing research. I know what the McGuinty government stands for: good government that works with the people and that believes in delivering in terms of infrastructure, education and health care.

In trying to determine what John Tory stands for, apart from rhetoric, I have been reading some of his party's material. Unfortunately, there isn't much there. One thing I did read and note with interest was their white paper A Prosperous Ontario. Here is a quote from that paper: "A strong economy creates the prosperity that enables us to invest in the services that are important to all of us, services such as health care and education."

This stands against what Mr. Tory has said. He has stated in this House his intention to cut \$2.5 billion from health care and to take money out of public education to promote private schools. Under the McGuinty government, my riding is finally starting to recover from the neglect it suffered on these fronts in the past. We do not want to take a step backwards when so much progress has been made.

I would like to invite the Leader of the Opposition to admit that he has made a mistake, that cutting funding to health care and education will harm the people of Ontario and my riding of Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh, and to publicly commit to supporting our economy by investing in services, not cutting them.

Of course, Ontario always has a leader committed to these things, and his name is Dalton McGuinty.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. David Orazietti (Sault Ste. Marie): I rise in the House today to speak about a number of key areas where the McGuinty government continues to demonstrate strong leadership: in particular, health care, education and infrastructure.

For the first time in Ontario's history, our government is tracking wait times on key procedures. This allows more Ontarians to receive the medical assistance they need when they need it. We've provided funding for the hiring of well over 4,000 nurses, while the previous government spent their time firing them and the NDP simply tore up their contracts.

The previous government closed 28 hospitals, while our government is building new ones and expanding others, including a commitment to fund an unprecedented 90% of capital costs for a new hospital in Sault Ste. Marie.

Our government has focused on reducing class sizes, improving ESL programs and getting resources to students. As a result, test scores are up, graduation rates are up, and there's now peace and stability in our schools.

Our ReNew Ontario strategy will provide \$30 billion in funding by 2009-10 for Ontario's aging infrastructure, which includes improving vital resources such as hospitals, roads and bridges.

Let's be clear: If the members opposite had chosen to make the necessary investments when they were in government, Ontario would not have the infrastructure deficit it faces today. The average family in Ontario can now look and see evidence of our investments in their communities and in our children's futures. I'm proud of our government's record and of the progress we have made to date for all Ontarians.

VISITORS

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: I'd ask all members in the House to welcome the students, staff and parents from

Faith Christian Academy, St. Thomas, in the riding of Elgin–Middlesex–London. Welcome to Queen's Park.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on estimates.

The Acting Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Mr. Hudak from the standing committee on estimates reported the following resolutions:

Resolved that supply in the following amounts and to defray the expenses of the following ministries and offices be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007:

Ministry of Education, vote 1001, ministry administration—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Dispense.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): I beg leave to present a report on child care activity from the standing committee on public accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Further debate?

Mr. Sterling: As I said yesterday when presenting another report, the public accounts committee reviews the recommendations of the auditor and asks that the deputy minister, in this case, Ms. Judith Wright, come forward and explain to the committee how the ministry is going to meet the objectives and observations of the auditor.

The committee noted, as did the auditor, that a big part of the problem with regard to child care in Ontario relates to knowing what the needs of various different communities are. This relates to a problem with regard to the information systems which the ministry has in place. There is a disparity amongst the various different parts and regions of the province as to how information is kept with regard to waiting lists for child care spaces. There also is no information as to how many of those child care spaces that are being waited for are for subsidized or for full-paying child care.

The bulk of the report of the public accounts committee relates to recommendations as to how these systems should be improved and calling on the ministry to report to the committee how those improvements are taking place.

With that, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker: Mr. Sterling has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

1350

VISITOR

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale-High Park): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I want to introduce a guest we are proud to have here. This is Shannon Hogan. She's from the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association provincial office, a long-time best friend of yours truly and a professor at York University. We're proud to have her.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Hon. Sandra Papatello (Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues): Earlier this morning, I was privileged to meet a group of grades 7 and 8 students from St. Michael Catholic School in Toronto and was very happy to have Ms. Hogan at our event as well, representing OECTA. They joined me to participate in the launch of a new public education campaign. This public education campaign is part of our \$68-million domestic violence action plan. It outlines our commitment to better support the victims of domestic violence and prevent abuse from happening in the first place. It's a groundbreaking campaign.

Governments have not traditionally been involved in public education on this subject matter, but it's a crucial component to the eradication of domestic violence. It recognizes the importance of healthy, equal relationships to the future success of our children and youth. It's a campaign that will help boys and girls understand that abuse is not okay.

Statistics also show that 37% of spousal assaults are witnessed by children. Unfortunately, some learn at a very early age the abusive patterns of behaviour that can be difficult to reverse. Boys who see more violence in the home are likely to grow up to be abusers, and girls are more likely to be victims. That's why we're launching this public education campaign. It's part of an early intervention strategy that fights violence at its very core.

The campaign is focused on youth between the ages of eight and 14. We were struck by the information that was elicited from the focus groups that we held, which told us that at very young ages our boys and girls are already getting quite seated in their attitudes about the difference between genders and who plays the stronger role. It really is something that we need to work on very early. This is the time to instill positive values and attitudes about relationships. It teaches boys and girls that they are

fully equal in all relationships. It teaches them to reject violence and to choose healthy, respectful relationships throughout their teenage years and as adults.

The campaign includes a website called EqualityRules.ca. The website is designed specifically for young people aged eight to 14. I will add that fortysomethings also could have great enjoyment at the website. It is interactive and full of important information that will help young people identify abusive behaviour and know what to do. It tells them where to go for help. I urge all young people, and adults who influence them, to visit EqualityRules.ca. Look for the television ads that are being launched by us to drive people to this website, which talks about the kinds of healthy relationships that we have to insist on for our young people and for our adults. Let's stop the violence before it begins.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT RENDEMENT SCOLAIRE

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): The McGuinty government is providing new funding and resources so that thousands of elementary students at almost 800 schools will receive intensive support in reading, writing and math. This is consistent with what we have been doing so far. Our government realizes that every child learns differently, that every child benefits from individual attention and that schools need specialized resources so they can help each student reach his or her full potential. That's why we're committed to providing Ontario schools with proven tools and resources that help kids excel in reading, writing and math.

Our government's \$25-million investment will particularly target elementary schools where at least two thirds of the students have achieved below the provincial standard on Education Quality and Accountability Office tests over the past three years.

Cependant, toutes les écoles de la province auront accès aux ressources et aux approches novatrices éprouvées qui amélioreront le rendement des élèves.

The Ontario-focused intervention partnership, or OFIP, combines the literacy and numeracy secretariat strategy with the successful turnaround team's approach, which substantially improved student achievement in many schools. In the first phase of the turnaround program, 84% of schools showed dramatically improved results.

My ministry's literacy and numeracy secretariat has developed a made-in-Ontario strategy based on proven practices in international jurisdictions such as Australia and Great Britain. Some of these strategies that have maximum impact on student achievement are uninterrupted blocks of time for reading, writing and math, using common assessment tools and providing professional learning support for staff.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, the government has set a target of 75% of grade 6 students meeting or exceeding the provincial standard in reading, writing and math by

2008. In fact, nearly 900 schools, or a quarter of elementary schools in Ontario, had at least 75% of students achieving at the provincial standard in grade 6 reading and writing in 2005-06. In 2002-03, fewer than 450 schools met the provincial standard in reading, so we've come a long way in three short years. Indeed, province-wide tests from the 2005-06 school year show that, overall, 64% of Ontario students are meeting or exceeding the provincial standards in reading, writing and math. That's a 10-percentage-point increase, up from 54% in 2002-03, which was the school year before we took office.

Il est évident que les élèves profitent déjà des initiatives prises par notre gouvernement pour aider un plus grand nombre d'élèves de l'élémentaire à réussir.

We have provided funding to hire 3,600 teachers. This will reduce the number of students in JK to grade 3 classes to a maximum of 20 in 90% of classes by 2007-08. We are providing a more well-rounded education with funding to hire 1,600 elementary specialist teachers in areas such as music, phys ed and the arts, and we have trained more than 12,000 teachers and principals in shared reading and 1,600 in differentiated instruction.

We're building on the tremendous improvement Ontario kids are making in reading, writing and math. EQAO tests do not capture the whole story of learning, but these additional resources will ensure that each of our students will have a firm foundation for becoming well-rounded citizens, ready and well-prepared for the future.

ALPHABÉTISATION DES ADULTES

ADULT LITERACY

L'hon. Christopher Bentley (ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités): Notre gouvernement a fréquemment confirmé qu'il existe un lien entre la réussite de notre province et la réussite de notre population. C'est pourquoi nous avons effectué d'importants investissements dans l'éducation élémentaire, secondaire et postsecondaire ainsi que dans l'apprentissage et la formation.

Today, I want to emphasize our government's efforts to improve adult literacy for two reasons: First, we want to give all people a chance to reach their potential by helping them access opportunity to upgrade the basic skills they need to prosper; and, second, because Ontario will only reach its potential when every Ontarian reaches theirs.

When Ontario boosts its overall literacy, our economic growth and overall productivity goes up as well. Strong literacy and numeracy skills help workers to perform at a higher level, thereby enhancing our workforce and our economy. In fact, a 2004 Statistics Canada study found that a rise of 1% in average literacy scores is associated with an eventual 2.5% increase in productivity and a 1.5% increase in gross domestic product.

Our government is committed to providing all Ontarians with the opportunities they need to reach their

potential. That's why I'm pleased today to announce that we're expanding our support for adult literacy with two important initiatives.

First, our government is investing \$10 million this year in academic upgrading, more than doubling our investment so that we can provide enhanced services. Through our literacy and basic skills services, we help adults who have left school gain the literacy, numeracy and essential skills they need. Academic upgrading is part of this program. It provides an alternate route to higher education and training for people who have left the school system. It helps them prepare for success in college and apprenticeships, and it gives people who might otherwise be stuck in low-paying jobs new hope for advancement and a brighter future.

1400

The new funding announced today will add community organizations and school boards to the community colleges who are already our partners in delivering this program. It will enable us to include customized program content to accommodate various learning styles. It will allow us to support learners in rural or remote locations or those who cannot access in-person services by providing more resources for online learning, in addition to classroom and group sessions. Overall, these enhancements will help us better reach groups that face barriers getting employment and training.

This morning I visited the Alexandra Park Neighbourhood Learning Centre in Toronto. This centre is located in an area where there's a high rate of youth unemployment, and one of the issues in the community is the need to help single mothers. Thanks to our new initiative, Alexandra Park will partner with George Brown College to deliver academic upgrading services targeted to single mothers who left school in grade 9 or 10 and to unemployed adults. The government will provide \$57,000 to them to introduce and run the program, including funding to offset the costs of child care services to accommodate learners. This is in addition to the almost \$120,000 the centre is receiving to offer literacy and basic skills programming.

This year, the McGuinty government is investing close to \$70 million province-wide in literacy programming, which means that 49,000 learners will have the opportunity to receive literacy and basic skills services, and of those, 4,200 will participate in academic upgrading.

Our government also wants to enhance the importance of adult literacy through a community-based initiative called Celebrating Literacy. Local boards in 10 communities across Ontario are being invited to bring together literacy program providers, employers, unions and learners to develop local campaigns to raise awareness of the value of literacy in building both a healthy community and a healthy economy. Each Celebrating Literacy campaign will encourage innovative new partnerships and the development of best practices in building literacy awareness and providing literacy services.

Lastly, I want to note that all of Ontario's adult literacy services are now accessible through Employment

Ontario, the province's new integrated training and employment network, which strengthens pathways to post-secondary education, apprenticeship and employment. Through Employment Ontario, we're providing better access to more opportunities for people to choose and train for careers that are in demand and for employers to find and train the employees they need.

With the help of our dedicated and growing community of people providing literacy services, we're working to ensure that everyone in Ontario has the tools they need to prosper in the economy of the 21st century.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Responses?

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby-Ajax): I'm pleased to respond on behalf of the PC caucus to the minister's announcement of the government's new initiative for youth, EqualityRules.ca. There's no question that educating our children to be strong, independent and assertive young citizens is extremely important; therefore, I commend the minister on recognizing this as an important priority.

I also commend the minister for targeting some of this education towards the prevention of domestic violence against women and children. Early education is important in curbing violent behaviour among youth in our schools and preventing abusive behaviour later in life. I'm very happy to see that this government has taken a step to address this very important issue.

I will say, however, that I will be anxiously awaiting evidence that this initiative actually produces appreciable results. From a government famous for photo ops and re-announcements, this could just be another day, another website. Between the government's wasteful spending of taxpayer dollars on self-congratulatory television ads and a wait times campaign that does nothing to actually reduce wait times, it's not unreasonable to be wary of the fact that this could simply just be window dressing. I'm hoping that this is not just another waste of taxpayers' money but an initiative that actually serves to educate our children.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): On behalf of John Tory and the PC caucus, I'm pleased to respond to the Minister of Education's comments today. Clearly, we stand on the side of literacy education, but I would like to begin by quoting a statement from the minister's press release today: "The government's \$25-million investment will target elementary schools where at least two thirds of students have achieved below the provincial standard on Education Quality and Accountability Office tests over the past three years."

My question is, how does the minister know this? The answer is simple: because of the work of the EQAO.

The EQAO was established by the former PC government as an independent, arm's-length organization

to develop, administer and report on the province-wide literacy tests for Ontario students.

On October 19, 2005, the words of Dalton McGuinty's special adviser on education on standardized tests were quoted into the record as follows: "Eight years after standardized tests in Ontario, there is mounting proof that scores are providing schools with the power tool to pinpoint how to help children learn."

The former PC government had the foresight to implement these tests to ensure that we could indeed identify where improvements need to take place. It is because of these standardized tests, which the McGuinty Liberals have so strenuously opposed since day one, that the government, the schools, their principals and parents can focus on where to make improvements in our education system, and that we can put the appropriate resources behind the teaching of these classes and into the classroom.

The minister's statement today is an admission that the standardized province-wide tests that the former PC government implemented to improve education in this province are indeed vital to the education system, and that without them the minister would not be making her statement today.

ADULT LITERACY

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I'm happy to respond to the minister of Training, Colleges and Universities' statement. I think you'll find that all members of this House would support initiatives to enhance adult literacy here in Ontario. While I commend the minister for today's announcement, I hope it's not just a diversion from some of the other issues the minister has failed to address in his portfolio.

As usual, the minister and his cohorts keep wandering the province claiming they have spent \$6.2 billion in post-secondary education when in reality you are going to spend half that amount before the next election and you know it. This is the government that promised to freeze tuition fees, but now we see tuition fees going higher and higher on their watch.

As the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance correctly pointed out recently, "A detached look at the numbers reveals that the public should not be left with the impression that all is well with higher education."

Yesterday, I met with the Ontario Colleges and University Faculty Association, and they expressed a number of concerns, which included the ability for universities to effectively manage the need for postgraduate spaces in our universities and to provide the faculty needed to teach those classes.

They have announced that they are going to open up to 14,000 additional spaces for graduate students, but they have not put one penny toward hiring new faculty, and you're going to see the student-faculty ratios go through the roof like nothing we've ever seen before. I think the most astounding thing the minister and his cohorts in the Liberal Party in the province keep saying is that their

student access guarantee will make sure every student has access to an Ontario college or university. Yet in estimates, he admitted that 20,000 students in this province—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): It's always a pleasure to respond to another Liberal website and another Liberal web campaign, and it's a pleasure to respond to Ms. Sandra Papatello, who, as a so-called feminist, led a smear campaign against myself—one of her sisters—in the last by-election.

To get on to how we produce equality, here's how we do it: First of all, we have a \$10-an-hour minimum wage, a living wage, in Ontario.

Interjections.

Ms. DiNovo: Time, please, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): No, no. Just keep going, keep going.

Ms. DiNovo: A living wage for dignity and security; a living wage that allows mainly women—single mothers—to have some dignity to pay the rent and feed the children.

Second, we want the \$300 million this McGuinty government promised for child care.

Third, and this is so important, we need guaranteed mandatory women's studies in high schools. I was sitting with my colleague Ms. Shannon Hogan in that very members' gallery over a year ago with the Miss G___ Project, which wants women's studies in high schools but still hasn't got funding for women's studies. We need that.

Last, of course, we need an end to the clawback of the national child benefit supplement, because without that, our poorest children are still poor.

And I love the fact that Ms. Papatello is not even listening; I love it that she is not even listening. Shame, shame.

ADULT LITERACY

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): I rise to respond to Minister Bentley's comments about adult education and adult literacy.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, adult education in this province is in turmoil, and the cuts keep happening. There's no grant for adult general interest and seniors' programming in Ontario's education formula. Across Ontario, this means these programs are being cancelled because boards don't have the funds to keep them going. The Canadian Adult and Community Education Alliance notes that fees for general-interest adult courses have risen 115% in the past five years, forcing many seniors to opt out.

Here's a short list of school boards that have made cuts to adult education in this past budget year: the French public board for southwestern Ontario, the Keewatin-Patricia District School Board, the Algonquin

and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board, and the Toronto District School Board. When trustees at the Dufferin-Peel Catholic board refused to cut adult education, the McGuinty Liberals kicked them out, took them out of their jobs, and are now making the cuts themselves.

People for Education report a 17% drop in the number of continuing education programs over the last decade.

Jack Henshaw, of Citizens for Lifelong Learning, said that the Ontario Liberals rallied with seniors in 2003 to protect adult education from cuts by the previous Conservative government. Three years later, these programs remain unfunded by the province, and seniors are again fighting to protect them.

This government has no reason to have any pride whatsoever in its record on these matters.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): It's my privilege today to respond to the Minister of Education. I listen very carefully to what she has to say, as I try to listen very carefully to every member. But I also listen very carefully to what the teachers of Ontario have to say about the EQAO as well. What they tell me is virtually at dead odds to what the minister has to say. They tell me that this test has everything to do with politics and virtually nothing to do with learning. The teachers of Ontario tell me that the marks are rising, not because the kids are learning more but because the test keeps getting easier and easier every year. The teachers of Ontario tell me that they are forced to teach to the test and not to what is best for their students. The teachers of Ontario tell me that the EQAO is neither independent nor transparent.

What I would like to hear personally from the Minister of Education is something that she has long promised to do and has failed to do so far. I'm looking forward to the day when she will stand up and make a real announcement in this House, and the real announcement I want to hear is that she and her government are finally going to fix the flawed funding formula, something that she campaigned on in the last election, something she has talked incessantly about, something that needs to be done. That's what really needs to be talked about in this House. When is the minister going to fix the flawed funding formula so that schools have specialist teachers, so that they have teaching assistants, so that the system actually—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): We have with us in the Speaker's gallery a parliamentary delegation from the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, led by Mrs. Nguyen Thi Hoai Thu, the chairwoman of the committee for social affairs of the National Assembly of Vietnam. Join me in warmly welcoming our guests.

DEFERRED VOTES

MINISTRY OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES
CONSUMER PROTECTION AND SERVICE
MODERNIZATION ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 DU MINISTÈRE
DES SERVICES GOUVERNEMENTAUX
SUR LA MODERNISATION DES SERVICES
ET DE LA PROTECTION
DU CONSOMMATEUR

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 152, An Act to modernize various Acts administered by or affecting the Ministry of Government Services / Projet de loi 152, Loi visant à moderniser diverses lois qui relèvent du ministère des Services gouvernementaux ou qui le touchent.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1414 to 1419.

The Speaker: Mr. Phillips has moved second reading of Bill 152, An Act to modernize various Acts administered by or affecting the Ministry of Government Services.

All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Bartolucci, Rick	Jeffrey, Linda	Phillips, Gerry
Bentley, Christopher	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Bountrogianni, Marie	Kular, Kuldeep	Pupatello, Sandra
Bradley, James J.	Kwinter, Monte	Qaadri, Shafiq
Broten, Laurel C.	Levac, Dave	Racco, Mario G.
Brownell, Jim	Marsales, Judy	Ramal, Khalil
Bryant, Michael	Martel, Shelley	Ramsay, David
Cansfield, Donna H.	McGuinty, Dalton	Ruprecht, Tony
Caplan, David	McMeekin, Ted	Sandals, Liz
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	McNeely, Phil	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	Meilleur, Madeleine	Smitherman, George
Crozier, Bruce	Milloy, John	Tabuns, Peter
Delaney, Bob	Mitchell, Carol	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dhillon, Vic	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Watson, Jim
Dombrowsky, Leona	Oraziotti, David	Wilkinson, John
Duguid, Brad	Parsons, Ernie	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duncan, Dwight	Peters, Steve	Zimmer, David
Gerretsen, John	Peterson, Tim	

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Chudleigh, Ted	Miller, Norm	Scott, Laurie
Elliott, Christine	Munro, Julia	Tascona, Joseph N.
Hardeman, Ernie	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Wilson, Jim
Hudak, Tim	Runciman, Robert W.	Yakabuski, John

The Deputy Clerk (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 53; the nays are 12.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): I would ask that the bill be referred to the standing committee on social policy.

The Speaker: So ordered.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): To the Premier: Yesterday, we launched wastebusters.ca as part of our campaign to blow the lid off McGuinty government waste. In the last 24 hours alone, we've received dozens of stories from Ontarians upset at how this government mismanages their tax dollars, outraged at how this government daily breaks its promise to spend dollars wisely.

Yesterday, we heard about a \$2.5-million commercial—one commercial—this government ran about education, and, again in the Ministry of Education, we heard about a 1,277% increase in spending on consultants, despite a promise from you not to use consultants, and \$1.2 million spent on hotels; all money not spent on students. Now we find out there's nearly \$4.5 million spent by the Minister of Education on spin doctors.

Premier, \$4.5 million would wipe out the deficits of the Limestone District School Board and the District School Board Ontario North East. Why are you spending the money on spin doctors rather than in the classrooms?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I'm sure that my good colleague opposite will be interested in a few facts by way of comparison between what we've been doing in our government through expenditures in comparison to the previous government. When it comes to consultants, we've reduced the use of consultants by 34%. That's a savings so far to the people of Ontario of \$225 million. When it comes to government advertising, on average, ministry spending on advertising is down 34%. Expenses for Conservative ministers and parliamentary assistants: We have spent 21% less than the previous government did. When we combine my office, the Premier's office, together with the cabinet office, we are down 19%. I'll put our expense record up against the previous government's any day.

Mr. Runciman: The Premier is treating—
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Stop the clock. The Minister of Energy will come to order.

Mr. Runciman: The Premier is treating hard-working taxpayers with disdain by thinking he can slough off his own promises made to get elected. Spin doctors, commercials and consultants are the education priorities of the government. In addition to the money spent on spin doctors, consultants and commercials, the government spent nearly \$1.2 million on hotels. Watching this government try and justify that yesterday was like watching

an excerpt with the Keystone Cops. The Premier says, "They have to travel because we don't want them holed up in the Mowat Block at Queen's Park." Then we find out they're Toronto hotels, and the minister says, "Well, we want them to travel because we're holed up at the Mowat Block."

Seriously, they're obviously not getting their money's worth from their spin doctors. Why do they insist on trying to justify this wasteful mismanagement of taxpayers' dollars? Why aren't you putting this money into classrooms? Answer that question.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, I hope these figures are placed on this new website. Our expenditures on consultants are down 34% in comparison to the previous government. Government advertising expenditures are down by 34%. Conservative ministers and parliamentary assistants: our expenditures are down 21%. The Premier's office and cabinet office: my expenditures are down 19%. If the people of Ontario want to know who the waste busters are, they're sitting on this side of the House.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Runciman: Well, with a \$17-billion increase in spending in the history of this government, I don't think they're waste busters at all.

Let's put this \$1.2 million spent on hotels in context. In order for this government to spend \$1.2 million at hotels for the period of time in which they spent it, they would have had to book 9,193 nights at these hotels: 1,181 at the Courtyard Marriott, 1,624 at the Delta, 1,194 at the Royal York, and 1,204 nights at the Sheraton hotel. In order for this government to spend as much as they've spent on hotels, they would have had to book 25 hotel rooms a night, every night for 365 straight days. It's outrageous nothing short of outrageous.

This government needs to get its priorities straight. Is the Premier still going to stand in his place and try to justify this disgusting waste of taxpayers' dollars?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I've given the figures a couple of times now, and I'm sure they'll appear shortly on that website set up by the Conservatives.

The member opposite now pretends that he's a champion of public education, and yet it is party policy to take money out of public schools, should they form the government, and put that money into private schools. That's what they're prepared to do.

We are prepared to put up our record against their record any day when it comes to public education in Ontario, whether you're talking about class sizes, test scores, graduation rates and the peace and stability that happily prevails inside each and every one of our public schools throughout the province of Ontario. No, we will not apologize for taking the necessary steps and making the necessary efforts to reach out to the broader education community so that in a co-operative and collaborative way we can improve the quality of education for all Ontario children.

COAL-FIRED GENERATING STATIONS

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): My question is for the Premier. Premier, now that you have broken your promise to the people of Ontario not once, not twice, but three times—three times—don't you think it's about time that you're honest with them? Yesterday, when grilled by reporters about your flip-flop on your coal promise, you replied, "Be careful about the advice you get from experts." This is another classic case of Daltonian deflection: Dodge, duck and pass the buck.

Premier, this is about your judgment and your credibility. On whose advice were you willing to rely in order to determine an issue as important as the energy future of the province of Ontario? Premier, provide those names now or just admit that you made the whole thing up because you will say anything, you'll do anything, just to get a vote.

1430

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): We remain committed to the fundamental goal of improving emissions and the effluent from coal-fired plants and are moving aggressively to achieve the goal of coal elimination in Ontario. It is an enormous challenge. It's one, I point out, that that party did absolutely nothing about in its eight years in power—absolutely nothing. We remain committed to moving forward on that challenge; to reducing the emissions and to the elimination of coal-fired generation in Ontario, replacing it with clean, green, renewable power. That's in the best interests of the public of Ontario. That's why we made the undertaking we did, and that remains the goal of this party and this government.

Mr. Yakabuski: Premier, when you guys want to trot out something that you perceive to be positive on the energy file, your energy minister stands up, puffs himself up like a rooster and says, "We're taking control of the energy file in the province of Ontario," yet when you're about to get egg on your face, you trot out one of your paid insulative agencies, like the OPA, to be the bearer of bad news, to be the ones who reveal that you have broken yet another McGuinty Liberal promise. You can't have it both ways, Premier.

Regarding your promise on coal, people close to the campaign said there was little or no analysis of this.

Premier, I'm going to ask you again. The people have a right to know. You say you've based the future of this province on expert advice. I'm going to ask you again: Please give us those names today or admit that you made the whole thing up just to get votes.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: The evidence is clear and unequivocal: Coal-fired generation pollutes. Coal-fired generation creates CO₂; it creates it in amounts that are unsafe and unhealthy. It remains good public policy to get rid of coal-fired generation.

Unlike that member and unlike his party, we will not support the increased use of coal. We will continue to

reduce the emissions associated with coal, to the eventual elimination of coal-fired generation in the province of Ontario. The downsides to coal-fired generation were then and are now a well-documented matter of public record.

I'd invite that member and his colleagues to join us as we move toward the elimination of coal-fired generation, to help us meet the challenge, because in spite of the challenge, it's a worthy objective and one that this government will achieve, ensuring the reliability of—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Yakabuski: Premier, an all-party task force came up with the date of 2015. You decided that you were going to do something different just to get votes.

Yesterday you quoted Dr. Phil, even though you reversed it. What you meant to say was: "The best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour." Well, the people of Ontario know exactly what to expect from you down the road. Do you know what? The cauldron is already cooking. You're brewing up another batch of McGuinty's marvelous snake oil because that's what you and your gang over there are going to be spreading out across the province of Ontario in 2007.

It is obvious that you will not reveal the fictitious names that are simply figments of your imagination, because those people don't exist, Premier.

Tell us once and for all that you will say anything, you will do anything, to get a vote. Shame on you.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: This government and its Premier will do everything and anything to improve the health outcomes of every Ontarian. That's why we're building clean, green power in Sault Ste. Marie and Port Burwell and Melancthon. That's why—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I need to be able to hear the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: That's why emissions at coal-fired plants are down 17% in total on CO₂; that's why we're going to continue to move towards the goal aggressively. They make fun of children with asthma; we think it's a serious issue. They make fun of global warming. They join their federal Tory friends and pretend that you don't have to do anything until 2050. We think we have to move aggressively. We look forward to hearing when they'll close down the coal plants, because their leader has been all over the map. First he said he'd do it, then he said he wouldn't do it, then he said at least 10 years, then he said he didn't trust the power authority and then he did. One goal, one objective: Close the coal plants and reduce the emissions for everyone.

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, I will not warn you again.

New question, leader of the third party.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. For the last four years, you've claimed that the best way to clean up Ontario's air is to shut down the Nanticoke coal-fired plant,

Ontario's biggest polluter. But today we hear that the McGuinty government now plans to "take the focus off when the plants will close and instead talk about reducing emissions." According to one source, your government's biggest problem is "not looking like you've made a 180-degree turn." Premier, does the McGuinty government have a plan to shut down the Nanticoke coal-fired plant, or have you indeed made a 180-degree turn again?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: We asked the power authority for advice on how to close coal-fired generation. They've offered up some recommendations. We're putting those out for public discussion. And unlike the member opposite, we remain committed to closing all coal-fired generation in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Hampton: We discovered yesterday that when asked about the date, this is something else the Premier doesn't want to talk about. Premier, you used to sermonize about how you were going to close the coal-fired plants. Now it seems like this is just a communication message for you. But the reality is that we're in a public health crisis. The Ontario Medical Association says that 5,000 people suffer premature death every year as a result of air pollution. Nanticoke is the single largest polluter in the province, the equivalent of three million cars. For four years you preached that the only thing to do was to shut down Nanticoke. So my question to the Premier again is, do you still believe that the most important thing Ontario can do to clean up our air and reduce greenhouse gas is to shut down Nanticoke?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: I would say to the member opposite, if that's his view, why did he write to us and ask us to put scrubbers on them and keep them around indefinitely? Your letter of September 26, 2005: "Instead of paying private companies to build gas-fired generating units, why not spend money on implementing clean coal technology?" The member likes to have it both ways. The member in northern Ontario likes to say, "Keep the coal plants open," and in southern Ontario, "Close the coal plants."

We acknowledge the challenge and difficulty associated with this. We acknowledge and recognize the matrix of considerations that go into ensuring the cleanest possible source of electricity available. That's why we remain committed. That's why we asked the power authority for its advice. That's why we put out the discussion paper to get public feedback. That's why the goal will be achieved, and it will be achieved over the next few years in a diligent, responsible, prudent fashion that ensures—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Hampton: The Ontario Medical Association tells us that 5,000 people die premature deaths in Ontario every year as a result of air pollution, and the McGuinty government's response is to say, "Oh, we're going to change our communication message." Last year in Toronto there were 48 smog days. Seniors and children were forced to stay indoors. More children than ever are suffering from asthma as a result of air pollution.

1440

I say to the Premier, given that Nanticoke is the largest single polluter in Ontario, given that it contributes to 5,000 premature deaths, where is the Minister of Health Promotion in the McGuinty government? Why isn't he demanding a firm date to close Nanticoke instead of a new communications message?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: I respond to the member that all ministers in this government and members of this caucus are proud of the fact that nitrous oxide is down 34%, CO₂ is down 15% since we took office, and SO₂ is down 28%. I think every member of this government and caucus acknowledges that we have more to do and is committed to doing that. That's why we asked the power authority for a plan to phase out the coal-fired generation.

I would say to the member opposite, if that is truly his view, why did he say on CBC radio on March 19, 2004, "I said you can't close all the coal-fired plants"? That's you. That's you, to the leader of the third party.

It is a challenge. It is difficult. We are moving aggressively and with great commitment to eliminating the harmful emissions from coal plants, with the eventual elimination of coal-fired generation in the province of Ontario.

ENERGY SUPPLY

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. In Ontario's energy history, nuclear power has proven to be expensive, unreliable and environmentally risky. Manitoba has abundant water resources capable of supplying Ontario with badly needed—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Howard, can they e-mail us some?

The Speaker: Order. I will not warn the Minister of Health again.

Mr. Hampton: Yes, you will warn him again and again and again—

The Speaker: I will not warn the leader of the third party again.

Leader of the third party.

Mr. Hampton: Manitoba has abundant supplies of green, clean water power capable of supplying Ontario with badly needed baseload electricity. Yesterday, the Manitoba government announced that they are proceeding with the Conawapa hydro dam and that Minnesota has signed on to purchase some of that electricity. But there was no mention of Ontario. Premier, with so much clean, green hydroelectricity available from Manitoba, why is the McGuinty government so obsessed with a \$40-billion mega-nuclear scheme?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): There was a mistake in the reporting of what the Manitoba government said yesterday, and I, unlike the member opposite, had a chance to speak with officials in Manitoba. Negotiations continue on. The extended contract was for an existing contract with the United States, and Manitoba remains very anxious to get a deal with Ontario. We are anxious to get that deal as well. And I'd ask the member opposite, why did you cancel it when you did?

Mr. Hampton: It's now clear that the permanent transmission upgrades in order to move Bruce A nuclear units 1 and 2 electricity will not be available. It's equally clear that the McGuinty government will have to use an expensive duct tape solution in order to avoid paying \$460 million a year to Bruce Power in penalties if they are not able to move that electricity. Also, as a result, you have capped the amount of wind power that you will accept from the Bruce Peninsula at a mere 10 megawatts, when much more is available.

My question is this. You've rejected clean, green hydro power from Manitoba. You've capped the amount of clean, green wind power from the Bruce Peninsula. Can the Premier tell us, please: Despite all your photo ops and media spin, isn't it oh, so clear that your real energy plan for Ontario is, "Go nuclear and go big"?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: It's sad that the reality can be put that way. First of all, earlier this week we announced a signed deal with Quebec: 1,250 megawatts of import capacity, clean hydroelectric. The 10-megawatt cap you're referring to is after the RFP. That doesn't include the almost 900 megawatts that are in various stages of development, and some of them are already up and running.

Manitoba is still very much alive and well, even though it was pronounced dead by that member and his government some 10 years ago. With respect to the Bruce transmission issue—absolutely right—we need more transmission. In fact, the old Ontario Hydro recommended as early as 1993, I think it was, that there should have been more transmission to accommodate the wind and biomass opportunities that were available on the Bruce. Unfortunately, you chose not to deal with it. The Tories refused to deal with it. We are dealing with it. We have a cleaner, greener supply of electricity. Next week we are going to be turning on the windmills in Sault Ste. Marie. Ontario—

The Speaker: Final supplementary?

Mr. Hampton: That's the media spin. Here's the reality: Manitoba has a surplus of clean, green hydroelectricity. Is Ontario there, making a deal? No. The Bruce Peninsula is one of the best potential sources of wind power, yet the McGuinty government is going to cap wind power from the Bruce Peninsula. Your hydroelectricity policy of driving rates through the roof has destroyed thousands of manufacturing jobs in northern Ontario. And what are we left with at the end of the day?

Despite all the photo ops, despite all the media spin, we're left with this: What the McGuinty government is really committed to is, "Go nuclear and go big," with a \$40-billion nuclear scheme. At the end of the day, Premier, at the end of all your waffling and your 180-degree turns, isn't that the reality for Dalton McGuinty: "Go nuclear and go big"?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: The reality is that this government has gone big on renewable clean, green energy in a way that no other government in the history of this province, or any other government in Canada, has ever done.

Let me just read something that the member was quoted as having said in the *Simcoe Reformer* on September 21, 2006. "In a speech to the Royal Canadian Legion in Simcoe, Mr. Hampton criticized the McGuinty government for emphasizing expensive new sources of electricity, such as wind farms, instead of making better use of the power Ontario already produces." So you are against wind. We produce a lot of nuclear power; you're right.

The final point I would make: In the integrated power system plan, Ontario's reliance on nuclear power is actually reduced. It's reduced because of the commitments we've made on renewable and because of our commitment to conservation. He cancelled conservation. He cancelled Conawapa. This government is about clean, green, renewable power and conservation. It's in everyone's health interests and it's certainly in the interest of a cleaner, better environment.

LANDFILL

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): My question is for the Premier. Today in the House a resolution was passed, and I would like to quote from it: that "the Minister of the Environment must confirm that the region impacted by the Green Lane landfill purchase is a 'willing host.'"

You might recall that, when you were in opposition in October 2000, you tabled a similar resolution supporting the concept of a willing host. Premier, what steps are you prepared to take to ensure that the people of London are indeed willing to accept waste from the city of Toronto?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of the Environment, Speaker.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I say to the community of Southwold, where this landfill is located, that our ministry takes very seriously the responsibility to ensure that a community is safe and healthy when it hosts a landfill operation, as it has with respect to the Green Lane landfill for more than 30 years.

This community has been host to this site for many years. The McCaig family, who operated this site prior to the purchase by the city of Toronto, has been a good neighbour to that community. All of the many, many issues associated with absolutely ensuring that this site would be safe going forward were examined in the context of a full environmental assessment, because that

environmental assessment examined a variety of issues. Many, many conditions were imposed on that environmental assessment, and that expansion was approved by me with absolute certainty that this community will be safe and protected as that landfill expands.

1450

The Speaker: Supplementary, the member for Haliburton-Victoria-Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): My question is to the Premier. Today the House did pass the resolution mentioned by the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka to clarify the uncertainty surrounding the Green Lane landfill. I can't help but think that if you actually wanted to divert the 60% of waste, we might not be in this mess.

We know that your Minister of the Environment has no plan to reach 60% diversion. We know that across Ontario the diversion rates are shockingly low. In light of the bold steps that the PC Party has taken, firstly, will you admit that you will not reach the promise you made of 60% waste diversion and say that you will now begin to work with us so that we can get things done for waste diversion for the people of London, Toronto and all of Ontario? Will you, Premier, today say that?

The Speaker: Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Ms. Broten: I suggest to the members opposite that they would be less uncertain if they took the time to read the 28 conditions that have been imposed on the environmental assessment to ensure that this community is safe and protected and the 105 conditions on the certificate of approval: those conditions requiring ground-water monitoring, air monitoring, a variety of protections that we put in place on every single landfill facility in this province, because although we are all rolling up our sleeves to ensure that we increase waste and organics diversion and expand the blue box program—we see household hazardous waste and electronics now being diverted and bottle returns, the many processes that our government is putting in place—we know that we will always have residual waste, and the Green Lane facility, as one example, is the host of such waste. We, at the Ministry of the Environment, ensure every single day that communities across this province are safe and protected, because unlike under your government, we will not—

The Speaker: Thank you.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): In the absence of the Minister of Finance, my question is to the Premier.

Mr. Premier, your so-called property assessment freeze means that in a couple of years Ontarians are going to be whacked with whopping property tax increases. Over the next week, more than a million Ontarians are going to get their new property tax assessments. This is just a hint to them of what is in store in the spring of 2009, when they will get not one but three years' worth of tax increases in the same bill. Moreover, they'll

be forced to pay them. Will you admit that Ontarians will be whacked with this triple whammy in the spring of 2009 if you follow through on your misguided plan?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): As the member well knows, as a former mayor, the taxes that people pay are based on two factors: one, their assessment; second, on the local rate that is set by the municipality. So if all the assessments went up in the municipality and the same amount of taxes were required for the services, the rate would come down. Assessment alone does not determine the taxes that people pay. Your statement that taxes will automatically go up as a result of a new assessment that's done three years from now is just plain and simply incorrect, and you should know that.

Mr. Prue: There is no sign that your government has any idea whatsoever what you are doing. You chose simply to freeze a system and not to do anything about it. Unlike your government, we came out with some ideas; you've rejected them. I understand that. But at least we have some ideas of where to go in all of this, so that homeowners will not be forced out of their properties because of out-of-control property tax increases.

You are the government. Surely you have more in mind than simply freezing the property taxes until after the next election. What are you going to do to fix Ontario's broken property tax system today?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: As the member well knows, the previous government took eight different shots at it during their years in office, and none of those bills that they passed helped the residential taxpayers or the property taxpayers out there at all.

We have a report from the Ombudsman, and MPAC is looking at that report. We're making the necessary changes so that once the tax system, in three years, is modified and brings the Ombudsman's recommendations into place, we will have a tax system we can all be proud of, and the people of Ontario will be paying their fair share of the property taxes that the municipalities need in order to provide the services they provide on an ongoing basis.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): My question is to the Minister of Education. Yesterday the Leader of the Opposition said that money we invest in public education is a waste. It seems the Tories think that we should not be funding smaller classes, that we should not be hiring new teachers, that we should not be investing—

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe a statement was made that was not at all true. I ask him to withdraw that statement.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): That is not a point of order. We don't need to play those games during question period.

The member for Scarborough Centre.

Mr. Duguid: Yesterday the Leader of the Opposition said that the money we invest in public education is a waste. It seems the Tories think that we should not be funding smaller classes, that we should not be hiring new teachers, that we should not be investing in new literacy programs. Students, parents and educators across this province disagree with that view and want to see the new investments that we're making in public schools. People who care about education in Ontario don't want to see the gains that we have made as a government lost by John Tory's intention to make cuts to education. Could it be that the real reason the Leader of the Opposition is upset is because we're investing in public education instead of private education?

Can the minister please set the record straight for this House and for Ontarians and explain just how the investments in public education are reaching our students in the classroom?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): I thank the member for the question. We are very proud that we cancelled the private school giveaway and invested that money instead in public schools. The questions that have come from the opposite side yesterday and today confirm that, like Mike Harris and Ernie Eves before him, the Leader of the Opposition does not believe in public education, does not believe in talking to educators as we're forming policy, and continues to believe that undermining public education is sound policy. We do not hold that that is the case. We are proud of our investment of \$2.7 billion in education. We're proud that our class sizes are going down. We're proud that 6,000 more students stayed in high school last year and graduated. We're proud that every student in this province is getting a shot at reading better, doing their math better and achieving better so they can move on.

Mr. Duguid: One of the examples of so-called waste the Leader of the Opposition cited yesterday was travel costs for the Ministry of Education. I know these travel costs include symposiums on important topics like bullying prevention and literacy initiatives. Those are important items. It's also important to keep these administration costs under control. The number cited yesterday was \$1.2 million spent last year on travel and related costs for the Ministry of Education. Since yesterday, has the minister had an opportunity to review public accounts, and can she place these travel expenditures in greater context? Are we spending more or less than the previous Conservative government on these items?

Hon. Ms. Wynne: I did have a chance to look at public accounts. First of all, what are being called hotel costs are actually travel costs, and the member has noted that. While the Tories said that we spent \$1.2 million in travel expenses, public accounts for 2002-03 show that the Conservative government spent \$2.5 million in travel expenses. So under the leadership of the member who sits beside the Leader of the Opposition, under Elizabeth Witmer as education minister, the Tory government spent twice as much as we spent on travel expenses.

Here's the thing: What we have done is spent 50% less, and we've done more. I can tell you, I was a parent

when Elizabeth Witmer was in office as the Minister of Education. She didn't want to talk to us; she didn't want to talk to teachers; she didn't want to talk to anyone who was interested in public education. What we've done is used that money to talk to the people on the front line to help us form policy, and we're not going to apologize for that. We're proud of that.

1500

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): My question is to the Minister of Government Services. As you know, today the Liberal majority passed Bill 152 for second reading. I hope we have meaningful public hearings, because I have hundreds of names on petitions across the province that are against Bill 152.

The McGuinty government did nothing for three years as Susan Lawrence, Elizabeth Shepherd, Paul Reviczky and others were defrauded of their homes and had fraudulent mortgages registered against their homes. Bill 152 ignores them. Why have you turned your back on these victims of fraud who relied to their detriment on a government-run land titles system that failed to protect them?

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): This is a very serious matter. I would say that we need to keep it in context. We have about 10 title frauds a year in the province out of about two million transactions. That's 10 too many, but that number hasn't changed, really, over the past few years. So title fraud, by every measure I've seen, has not gone up; mortgage fraud, we have to deal with.

The bill has some very significant moves in it. It ensures that if anyone has lost their title fraudulently or any document is registered against their title fraudulently, that transaction will be undone and the rightful owner will have their title restored and won't be responsible for the mortgage. We've got three other significant moves within the bill to deal with this.

That's not all we're doing. I've said publicly that this is an ongoing process that we, the financial markets, the financial community and the real estate community must deal with.

Mr. Tascona: But it's not retroactive, Minister.

You've acknowledged that the use of date rape drugs in bars is a serious problem. To great fanfare, your government has held out that Bill 152 is the cure. However, in Bill 152 you've made it optional for bars to apply for the measures needed to protect women from date rape drugs. Why is a woman's right to safety and protection so watered down in Bill 152?

Hon. Mr. Phillips: I thought you were going to follow up on real estate fraud, but just to assure the public: We're very much determined to eliminate any real estate fraud.

On the matter you've just raised, which is another part of the bill, I think we've got 15,000 licensed establishments in the province of Ontario. I'm not sure that we

want to say to a Swiss Chalet, "You have to comply with exactly the same regulations you might find in a very large bar." I'm not sure we want to say to our business community that one size fits all. I happen to think that maybe not every Swiss Chalet has to follow exactly the same rules as a large bar. Now, the Conservative Party may disagree with that, but I think the bill responds to the concerns about date rape, ensures that there is a process in place so that any establishment that's concerned about it can deal with it, but we don't impose exactly the same conditions on 15,000 establishments. It seems to me that that's just a proper approach to take with our business community. I think it protects women and protects our business community for making sure that they can—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. New question.

GRIDLOCK

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto-Danforth): My question is for the Premier. As you're well aware, the greater Toronto area has a growing gridlock crisis, and yet your government's capital spending on roads and highways outstrips that for transit by two to one. The TTC is starved for funding, gridlock is costing the GTA billions a year, and yet your government is not restoring funding for transit to pre-1995 levels. Will your government wake up to this gridlock juggernaut in the GTA and restore pre-1995 transit funding?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): We'll begin with the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I think that the member raises a very good issue. A previous government downloaded public transit onto municipalities. It has since been uploaded. But at the same time they downloaded it, they significantly cut funding and support to public transit. That's why our government has provided municipalities across the province of Ontario who have public transit systems with two cents of provincial gasoline tax—unprecedented support for public transit. But in addition to that, I had the great pleasure, with the Premier, former Prime Minister Martin and Mayor Miller, to sign an historic agreement: \$1 billion in capital supports for the Toronto Transit Commission. Historic, towards steady good repair, but it didn't just end there: An additional \$1 billion in federal, provincial and municipal support for GO Transit expansion, enhancement and improvement. We have funded public transit to a level you could only dream of.

Mr. Tabuns: Ah, so many photo ops, so little action.

Minister, your government, your Liberal members know that gridlock is out of control. In fact, the member for Stoney Creek was talking yesterday about the cobwebs that grow on the front of cars as they inch their way down the QEW. In order to reduce gridlock, to reduce smog, to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases, you need to restore funding for transit to pre-1995 levels:

75% of capital costs from the province; 50% of operating costs. You can talk all you want about some here and some there, but you have not restored the funding that needs to be restored. You know it.

Look at the results. Gridlock is getting worse, not getting better under your watch. When are you going to restore the funding to transit?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: My colleague the Minister of Transportation wants in on this farce.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Transportation): Only the member of the NDP would call \$1 billion nothing. For the last three years alone, this government has given the Toronto transit authority \$1.5 billion for transit; \$830 million to GO Transit in this year alone. By the time 2010 comes around, it would be \$1.2 billion in gas tax, the majority of which goes to the city of Toronto because of its size and its ridership. We have the GTTA, we have the fare card and we've put in place a transit authority to look at not only dealing with the movement of goods from Hamilton to Durham but the regional roads as well.

There's no question: We've got \$3.8 billion in highways and roads in southern Ontario for five years—the first time ever, that kind of strategic planning—\$1.8 billion in the north. And you have the audacity to say we've done nothing? Give me a break.

EASTERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, in a recent program, Lorne Wiebe, a prominent radio commentator from my riding of Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh, had this to say: “You can't just bring new high-paying companies to town unless they know beforehand that they will have the workforce ready to handle specialized jobs.” This was in reference to the situation in communities like Cornwall, Chesterville and Iroquois that have recently lost high-paying manufacturing jobs. And he has a point.

The people of my riding are willing to work, but they need to have access to the specialized training needed for positions in such fields as technology and pharmaceuticals. My riding is an ideal place for new businesses to settle, and indeed, many have started to do just that. It is important that local residents have access to the training they'll need to fill the positions available in these businesses.

Minister, what is this government doing to assist my constituents and other rural Ontarians with the education and skills training they need to succeed?

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I'd like to thank the member from Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh not only for his question but for his advocacy on behalf of the training needs of the region. The fact of the matter is that as a result of his work, several things have happened.

First of all, he advocated for increased opportunities for apprentices to do their in-school training, and we

responded last spring with a \$240,000 announcement to strengthen in-school training in his riding. He called for a strengthening of the Job Connect process in his region. That is a very important process that provides not only counselling and support but directs people on to learning and basic skills or academic upgrading opportunities. We responded with a \$2-million investment to Job Connect in his riding and region. He asked for a change to the adjustment advisory process, and we responded by making it faster—you now get service within an hour—and by providing support for the projects. He's made an incredible difference to the region.

1510

Mr. Brownell: I want to express my appreciation to St. Lawrence College and to the director of the campus, my friend Pat Finucan, for their continued good work in pursuing the best education programs for young people in my riding. Specialized education is essential for those considering employment in the sorts of industries my municipal colleagues and I are pursuing for the region.

While such companies will play a big role in the future of my riding, there are many of my constituents who feel their interests lie in working for themselves by forming their own businesses. Indeed, in the wake of the Domtar closure, many former employees of the mill went on to open their own businesses and are starting to experience success.

Minister, what is this government doing to foster entrepreneurial spirit among my constituents and in other areas of rural Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: I refer that to the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship): I want to thank the member for asking his question. I'm very pleased to note that most of the people wanted to open their own businesses, and I'm pleased to say that we have about 44 enterprise centres, 32 of them actually in the rural areas, that assist people in opening their own businesses. The Cornwall Business Enterprise Centre alone has assisted 53 new businesses to start in the last six months.

In addition to that, I want to say that there is no better way to start businesses than to encourage an entrepreneurship culture in our youth, and we have excellent programs on that front as well. We have a summer company program in which 307,000 students participated, and most of them were actually from the rural areas. In addition to that, we have given \$1.7 million to the Canadian Youth Business Foundation, which will help 282 students and maybe create about 3,500 new jobs.

I'm very pleased to say that we have excellent programs to encourage entrepreneurship in this province.

GRIDLOCK

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Gridlock is costing the GTA billions of dollars a year, and this situation is getting worse on your watch. This morning, the Residential and

Civil Construction Alliance released its report on gridlock in the GTA. They have made several recommendations to the government to ensure that gridlock becomes a thing of the past.

The situation is critical. A solution from the McGuinty government is long overdue, and what we have seen so far from this government is nothing but announcements and re-announcements and appointments to boards where no money is flowed. The GTTA, like thousands of motorists on the road, sits idle.

Minister, you continue to dither, delay and deflect responsibility for tackling gridlock in the GTA. When are you going to stop paying lip service to this issue and actually make something happen that really addresses the issue of gridlock in the GTA?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Transportation): Actually the report that was given out this morning is very much in sync with what the government is currently doing, and we welcome the report. Unlike members across the way who do not care for any expert advice, we welcome the expert advice we've just received.

There is no question that gridlock is a serious issue, but the fact of the matter is that we have, we are and we will continue to address the issue. Again, there's money set aside for the GTTA. We've asked, until after the election, that the people themselves can be elected or unelected. They come from the regions—Hamilton to Durham—they have a strategy in place, and the money is there to start the planning. Without question, it is there. We've given the money.

When you talk about public transit, you heard me say before: \$1.5 billion; \$1.2 billion for all the cities from the gas tax—ongoing, continual funding that is occurring to help relieve gridlock and congestion on our roads.

Mr. Chudleigh: I hope the minister's expert advice is better than the expert advice the Premier got on coal-fired plants.

Minister, the reality is that gridlock is choking economic growth in the greater Toronto area. According to the TD Bank, the loss from congestion and shipment delays in the GTA already totals over \$2 billion annually. Not only are your government's punitive tax policies making Ontario as a whole an uncompetitive place for jobs and investment; you can now also take credit for the demise of the entire GTA as the economic engine of Ontario that it should be.

The reality is that your failure to take any real action on the issue of gridlock in the GTA is costing us billions of dollars annually. Unless you stop dithering, delaying and deflecting on this issue, Ontario is doomed to remain the economic caboose of this country.

Minister, when are you going to stop saying things just to get elected and address the real issue of gridlock in the GTA?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: Again, I welcome the question. I guess the question back is, would you rather cut taxes or invest in the infrastructure for Ontario, which we have done to the tune of \$5.6 billion? But aside from that, if

you really want to talk about reality, the reality is that that party did nothing—I repeat, nothing—on transportation for all of the time they were in there except to download 5,000 kilometres of roads, not give sufficient support, didn't put in a strategic plan, didn't do the investment, actually cancelled public transit investments, and suddenly they are concerned about gridlock? Give me a break again. This is incredible. We've done the investment. We have the money we've put aside: \$1.2 billion in gas tax alone goes to the municipalities, much less \$830 million this year alone for GO Transit. We're working, we know the problem, we've picked up your mess, we're doing something about it, but we're doing it strategically and with sustainability in mind, so it is not a one-off like you did in the past.

PROTECTION FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Premier. This morning my Bill 30, Safe Needles Save Lives Act, passed second reading and was referred to committee. Also this morning I received 1,500 signed postcards from Ontario health care workers—I'm going to deliver those to you—who want you to make the use of safe needles mandatory in the province, which is what my bill does. Premier, since you didn't have an opportunity to participate in the debate this morning, can you tell me if you support my bill?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): It's a privilege to have a chance to talk on this subject again, and by way of supplementary, I'll put the member on notice that the Minister of Labour will want to talk about the work that labour has been doing with the front-line health care providers. As a government, I think people will note that the Legislature did pass the honourable member's bill this morning. That's very noteworthy. I had a chance on my way into the building to speak with the president of ONA, Linda Haslam-Stroud, and to hear about their desire to see more movement on this. There's the acknowledgement that we've invested \$100 million in safe needles, and also in ceiling-mounted and other bed-lift and equipment design to make our front-line health care workers healthier. We acknowledge that there is important work to be done on this point. We appreciate the efforts of the honourable member, and by way of supplementary we'll give the Minister of Labour a chance to talk about the processes that he's been leading at the ministry.

Ms. Martel: Premier, needle-stick injuries are a critical health and safety issue. It's estimated that 33,000 needle-stick injuries occur in the health care sector in Ontario every year. It costs the health care system over \$64 million every year for testing and treatment of these injuries. Over and above that are the WSIB costs that are associated with lost-time claims from those who suffer

from needle-stick injuries, and far and away over and above that are the emotional costs to workers and their families as they wait for months to discover whether or not they have contracted a deadly disease.

Premier, it's not good enough for your Minister of Labour to say, as he has, that his health and safety advisory committee might deal with this issue and that your government might do something as a result. What will you do to ensure that this bill gets passed, so that needle-stick injuries become history in Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): I'm very proud to stand behind our record when it comes to health and safety. We had some of the lowest numbers of inspectors in all of Canada upon taking office in 2003. We have moved forward, and we're close to the completion of hiring our 200 inspectors, with many of those inspectors dedicated specifically to the health care sector, and specifically looking out for occupational health and safety-related issues.

I would say to the honourable member that when she was in government, they had an opportunity under section 21 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act to form a committee. They did not do that. This government took action with the creation of a section 21 committee. This committee is allowing the opportunity for both management and labour to meet and talk about those issues that are of importance to the health care sector. That did not exist under her government. The committee has just met for the first time. September 12, 2006, was that first opportunity. I look forward to the recommendations in that committee because those are the front-line individuals who'll bring forth recommendations.

1520

GREAT LAKES CHARTER ANNEX AGREEMENT

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. As we all know, one of our most valuable natural resources is water. Water is a shared resource, however, and it is a priority for all Ontarians. Ontario shares the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin with Quebec and eight US states. It is up to all levels of government on both sides of the Canada-US border to protect and conserve the waters of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin.

Minister, could you please explain how the charter annex agreements of December 2005 complement and enhance existing protections for the waters of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin?

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): I very much appreciate the interest that the member from Ottawa–Orléans has in the environment, and specifically today, in the Great Lakes.

The charter annex for the Great Lakes provides a framework for each province and state to pass laws that put into place new safeguards for our shared waters. By

setting a high environmental standard across the basin and overseeing water uses, these agreements will help each jurisdiction build a stronger, healthier and more prosperous future for its citizens, its environment and its economy.

If you remember, we here in Ontario insisted on and achieved a virtual ban on diversions. We also achieved a stronger commitment to water conservation, an increased role for science in decision-making and a new commitment enabling dialogue and input from First Nations people.

The charter annex enhances existing protections because we have already put in place strict laws banning water diversions out of the province's three major basins: the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence basin, the Hudson Bay basin and the Nelson River basin out west.

Mr. McNeely: Minister, it is refreshing to hear that our province has been a leader in these negotiations that have banned diversions and strengthened water conservation.

Minister, since conservation has been on the minds of Ontarians and, indeed, the world over the past few weeks and especially this week, I thought it would be helpful if you could let us know how this agreement fits into the conservation culture in our province. Minister, what goals and objectives have been set out by the Great Lakes Charter Annex for water conservation?

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: Members on this side of the House are very much committed to building a culture of conservation in the province of Ontario.

Regional goals and objectives for water conservation and efficiency will be developed, and they will be reviewed every five years. Each province and state will develop and implement a water conservation and efficiency program. The provinces and states will use a consistent standard to review proposed uses of basin water. This will significantly increase the control of water uses in the Great Lakes states, as there was previously no such standard. Economic development will be fostered through the sustainable use and responsible management of basin waters.

The waters of the basin are recognized as a shared public treasure, and there is a strong commitment to continued public involvement in the implementation of this agreement.

EASTERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): I have a question for the Premier. The Premier represents an eastern Ontario riding, and he'd be well aware of the fact that many parts of that region are suffering with the manufacturing job losses and the challenges in the agricultural sector.

Earlier this year, this House unanimously passed a motion calling for the creation of an eastern Ontario secretariat, lodged within the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, to provide a window for eastern Ontarians into government. I wrote you many months

ago with respect to passage of this resolution in the House without any objectors. I've had over 100 municipalities write me in support of that resolution and that initiative. Premier, you've failed to respond to my letter. What is your position on the creation of an eastern Ontario secretariat?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): What I will do is undertake to the member opposite to look into this and come back to him with a response forthwith.

Let me tell you as well that I share the member's concern about ensuring that eastern Ontario is at all times on the map here at Queen's Park. It's where my home is. It's where there exists continuing tremendous potential.

I must say as well that I'm very optimistic about the recent growth that has taken place there, the job creation that has taken place there. For example, most recently I attended an event in Belleville, where there is a new Kellogg's manufacturing plant going in. That's the first new plant, they tell me, for Kellogg's in North America in some 20 years. Belleville landed that investment, and we were pleased to partner with Kellogg's, by the way, to ensure that we were able to snap that up.

I undertake to the member opposite to get back to him forthwith.

PETITIONS

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the proposed Long-Term Care Homes Act is extremely lengthy and complex and requires full and extensive parliamentary and public debate and committee hearings throughout the province; and

"Whereas the rigid, pervasive and detailed framework proposed is excessive and will stifle innovation and flexibility in the long-term-care sector; and

"Whereas the additional burden, red tape and punitive measures imposed by the proposed legislation will aggravate and exacerbate the chronic underfunding of the sector to the detriment of residents of the homes; and

"Whereas the proposed legislation will have serious implications for the viability of the for-profit, and not-for-profit, charitable and municipal long-term-care sectors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We demand that the McGuinty government withdraw the proposed act, or remove the offending sections, and fulfill its commitment by a substantial increase in funding on a multi-year basis in the order of the promised \$6,000 per resident, per year."

It's brought to me by residents and staff from long-term-care centres within my riding of Haliburton–Victoria–Brock. I will hand it to page Simon.

FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Northwestern Ontario Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder (FASD) Diagnostic Clinic has been operating as a demonstration project since December 2004 with funds received through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care;

"Whereas this funding expired July 31, 2006;

"Whereas there is an enormous need in northwestern Ontario for regional access and accurate diagnosis of FASD;

"Whereas, without the northwestern Ontario FASD clinic, services are only accessible through a clinic in Winnipeg, Manitoba, or St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto, for which there is a four-year wait;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Be it resolved that the provincial government commit to provide ongoing funding for the maintenance of the regional FASD diagnostic clinic, with two sites in northwestern Ontario."

This is signed by several residents of northwestern Ontario, and I've affixed my signature as well.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I'm delighted to read this petition. It's about access to trades and professions in Ontario, and it's addressed to the Parliament of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

"Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent, arbitrary and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

"Whereas action by Ontario's trades and professions could remove many such barriers, but Ontario's trades and professions have failed to recognize that such structural barriers exist, much less to take action to remove them, and to provide fair, timely, transparent and cost-effective access to trades and professions for new Canadians trained outside Canada;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario Legislative Assembly urge the members of all parties to swiftly pass Bill 124, the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006, and to require Ontario's regulated professions and trades to review and modify their procedures and qualification requirements to swiftly meet the needs of Ontario's

employers, Ontario's newcomers and their own membership, all of whom desperately need the very skills new Canadians bring working for their organizations, for their trades and professions, and for their families."

I'm delighted to give this to this page to bring to you, and I sign this.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas every Ontarian wants the best water quality possible; and

"Whereas the goal of clean water can be achieved effectively through amendments to existing legislation; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals are determined to hammer through the flawed legislation known as the Clean Water Act; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals have failed to put in place adequate, stable, long-term funding into the bill; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals have failed to effectively address the numerous problems in the bill; and

"Whereas rural Ontario stands to suffer significantly under this poorly-thought-out policy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To not pass Bill 43 (the Clean Water Act) until proper funding and amendments are in place."

I affix my signature, as I agree with this petition.

1530

TUITION

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition that has been signed by hundreds of students at Laurentian University in Sudbury, and it was given to me by the student association. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario Liberal government cancelled the tuition fee freeze after only two years and approved fee increases of up to 36% over the next four years; and

"Whereas tuition fees in Ontario have increased by more than four times the rate of inflation over the past 15 years; and

"Whereas a majority of Ontarians oppose tuition fee increases and support greater public funding for colleges and universities; and

"Whereas improvements to student financial assistance are undermined by fee increases; and

"Whereas the Ontario government's recent increase to student loan limits is set to push student debt to approximately \$28,000 for a four-year program; and

"Whereas per-student investment in Ontario still lags significantly behind the vast majority of jurisdictions in North America;

"Therefore we, the undersigned" call on the Legislative Assembly to do the following:

"—reduce tuition fees to 2004 levels for all students in Ontario and implement an immediate tuition fee freeze;

"—increase public funding for post-secondary education to promote access and quality;

"—expand access to financial aid in Ontario, especially for part-time students; and

"—double the number of upfront, need-based grants for Ontario students."

I have affixed my signature to this.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly on cross-border travel. I want to thank Paula Arruda, Felix Li and Lily Leung, all of Mississauga, for collecting some signatures on it. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the United States government, through the western hemisphere travel initiative, is proposing that US citizens will require a passport or single-purpose travel card to cross the Canada-US border; and

"Whereas a passport or single-purpose travel card would be an added expense, and the inconvenience of having to apply for and carry a new document would be a barrier for many Canadian and US cross-border travellers; and

"Whereas the George Bush government proposal could mean a loss of as many as 3.5 million US visitors to Ontario, and place in peril as many as 7,000 jobs in the Ontario tourism industry by 2008, many of which are valuable entry jobs for youth and new Canadians; and

"Whereas many of the US states bordering Canada have expressed similar concerns regarding the punitive economic impact of this plan, and both states and provinces along the US-Canada border recognize that the importance of the safe and efficient movement of people across that border is vital to the economies of both countries;

"Be it therefore resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario support the establishment of a bi-national group to establish an alternative to the proposed US border requirements, and inform Prime Minister Harper that his decision not to advocate on behalf of Ontarians is ill-advised and contrary to the responsibilities of elected representatives in Canada."

An excellent petition. I'm pleased to sign it and to ask page Shannon to carry it for me.

FREDERICK BANTING HOMESTEAD

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Sir Frederick Banting was the man who discovered insulin and was Canada's first Nobel Prize recipient; and

"Whereas this great Canadian's original homestead, located in the town of New Tecumseth, Alliston, is deteriorating and in danger of destruction because of the inaction of the Ontario Historical Society; and

"Whereas the town of New Tecumseth, under the leadership of Mayor Mike MacEachern and former Mayor Larry Keogh, has been unsuccessful in reaching an agreement with the Ontario Historical Society to use part of the land to educate the public about the historical significance of the work of Sir Frederick Banting;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Culture and the Liberal government step in to ensure that the Banting homestead is kept in good repair and preserved for generations to come."

Of course, I agree with this petition. I will sign it and give it to page Sarah to bring to the table.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have petitions that have been sent to me by SEIU. They've been signed by people who live in Barrie, Cambridge and Brantford. They read as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, in June 2003, Dalton McGuinty said Ontario Liberals are committed to ensuring that nursing home residents receive more personal care each day and will reinstate minimum standards, and inspectors will be required to audit the staff-to-resident ratios; and

"Whereas Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman, in October 2004, said that the Ontario government will not set a specified number of care hours nursing home residents are to receive each day; and

"Whereas Ontario nursing home residents still receive the lowest number of care hours in the Western world; and

"Whereas studies have indicated nursing home residents should receive at least 4.1 hours of nursing care per day; and

"Whereas a coroner's jury in April 2005 recommended the Ontario government establish a minimum number of care hours nursing home residents must receive each day;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario immediately enact a minimum standard of 3.5 hours of nursing care for each nursing home resident per day."

I agree with the petitioners. I have affixed my signature to this.

IDENTITY THEFT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): Speaker, I want to tell you that I'm still receiving petitions about identity theft from the Consumer Federation of Canada. It's addressed to the Parliament of Ontario and specifically to the Minister of Government Services. It reads as follows:

"Whereas identity theft is the fastest-growing crime in North America;

"Whereas confidential and private information is being stolen on a regular basis, affecting literally thousands of people;

"Whereas the cost of this crime exceeds billions of dollars;

"Whereas countless hours are wasted to restore one's good credit rating;

"We, the undersigned, demand that Bill 38, which passed the second reading unanimously in the ... Legislature on December 8, 2005, be brought before committee and that the following issues be included for consideration and debate:

"(1) All consumer reports should be provided in a truncated (masked-out) form, protecting our vital private information such as SIN and credit card numbers" and other numbers.

"(2) Should a credit bureau discover that there has been a breach of consumer information, the agency should immediately inform the victimized consumer.

"(3) Credit bureaus should only report inquiries resulting out of actual applications for credit and for no other reasons.

"(4) Credit bureaus should investigate any complaints within 30 days and correct or automatically delete any information found unconfirmed or inaccurate."

Since I agree with this petition, I'm delighted to sign my name to it and send it to you.

MUNICIPAL PLANNING

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas section 23 of the recently passed Planning and Conservation Land Statute Law Amendment Act, 2006, Bill 51, exempts energy projects from the municipal planning process; and

"Whereas we believe that it is essential to have more transparency and openness in the planning process, not less; and

"Whereas we believe that public consultation and municipal planning on the location of power plants is essential to ensure healthy sustainable communities;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To amend section 23 of the Planning and Conservation Land Statute Law Amendment Act, 2006, to include a process for appeal."

I'm in agreement with this and will sign my name to it, and I'm pleased to give this to page Andrew.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition that has been sent to me by L. Moorby of Kingston, Ontario. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas children with autism who have reached the age of six years are no longer being discharged from their preschool autism program; and

"Whereas these children should be getting the best special education possible in the form of applied behaviour analysis (ABA) within the school system; and

"Whereas there are approximately 700 preschool children with autism across Ontario who are required to wait indefinitely for placement in the program, and there are also countless school-age children who are not receiving the support they require in the school system; and

"Whereas this situation has an impact on the families, extended families and friends of all of these children; and

"Whereas, as stated on the website for the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, 'IBI can make a significant difference in the life of a child with autism. Its objective is to decrease the frequency of challenging behaviours, build social skills and promote language development';

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to fund the treatment of IBI for all pre-school children awaiting services. We also petition the Legislature of Ontario to fund an educational program in the form of ABA in the school system."

I agree with the petitioners and I have affixed my signature to this.

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): Pursuant to standing order 55, I rise to give the Legislature the business of the House for next week.

On Monday, November 20, 2006, in the afternoon, third reading of Bill 52, Education Statute Law Amendment Act (Learning to Age 18); in the evening, second reading of Bill 155, Electoral System Referendum Act.

On Tuesday, November 21, 2006, in the afternoon, second reading of Bill 158, Public Service of Ontario Statute Law Amendment Act; in the evening, to be confirmed.

On Wednesday, November 22, 2006, in the afternoon, NDP opposition day; in the evening, second reading of Bill 69, Regulatory Modernization Act.

On Thursday, November 23, 2006, in the afternoon, third reading of Bill 50, Traditional Chinese Medicine Act.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ELECTORAL SYSTEM REFERENDUM ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR LE RÉFÉRENDUM RELATIF AU SYSTÈME ÉLECTORAL

Mrs. Bountrogianni moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 155, An Act to provide for a referendum on Ontario's electoral system / Projet de loi 155, Loi prévoyant un référendum sur le système électoral de l'Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): The Chair recognizes the minister.

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): Mr. Speaker, I'll be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Brampton Centre.

I'm pleased to rise in the House today to begin second reading debate on Bill 155, An Act to provide for a referendum on Ontario's electoral system, 2006. This bill, if passed, will enable Ontarians to have their say if the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform recommends a change to the province's electoral system.

L'Assemblée des citoyens indépendante évaluera le système électoral existant de l'Ontario et d'autres systèmes, et recommandera si l'Ontario devrait conserver le système actuel ou en adopter un autre. Si l'Assemblée des citoyens recommande un changement, nous tiendrons un référendum pendant la prochaine élection provinciale en octobre 2007.

This is historic legislation. Regular elections allowing citizens to choose who will represent them and govern are the foundation of our democracy. For the first time in our province's history, Ontarians are having the opportunity to participate in a full, open debate on our electoral system. This is an unprecedented opportunity for Ontarians to participate in strengthening Ontario's democracy. No government in this province has ever given citizens this kind of opportunity to shape how their government works. This is a healthy and an exciting process.

Different electoral systems have their strengths and weaknesses and can have a significant impact on our political landscape. And our government believes that it is the people of Ontario who should decide what values are most important and how they want their government to work. With the establishment of the citizens' assembly and the introduction of this legislation, our government is making it clear that the shape of Ontario's democracy is a matter for Ontarians to decide.

The Electoral System Referendum Act, 2006 is being introduced to ensure that if a referendum on electoral reform is required, Ontarians will have a legitimate process in place that will provide a clear outcome. A referendum decision rule sets the level of popular support required for a referendum option to carry. A decision rule may include more than one threshold that must be met.

Should the citizens' assembly recommend a new electoral system for Ontarians to vote on, the Electoral System Referendum Act, 2006 proposes two thresholds that would need to be met to give Ontarians the clarity that is required on such an important matter. Any change to a new electoral system in Ontario would need clear popular support beyond a simple majority—60% of all votes cast province-wide. In addition, a simple majority of more than 50% of votes cast in at least 64 provincial ridings—an equivalent of at least 60% of the province's ridings—would be required. This is the same decision rule that the governments of British Columbia and Prince Edward Island used in their referendums on electoral reform.

A decision of this magnitude deserves to have the support of a solid majority of Ontarians across the province. This proposed legislation reflects the significance of this decision. I was disappointed when I heard that members across the floor were unhappy with the referendum threshold. The adoption of a new electoral system would represent a foundational change to Ontario's democracy, and that was the principal reason behind choosing the threshold.

John Ibbitson of the *Globe and Mail* wrote in his October 27 column that with respect to a referendum on electoral reform "50% plus one just isn't enough." He continued to write, "For a referendum to validate a major change, the result must indicate a consensus, both within the overall population and among its regions."

He continues, "We can debate whether 55% or 60% signals that consensus. But a bare majority today means opinion could have shifted by tomorrow. And even the most fervent supporters of electoral reform should agree that we need greater certainty from the public, before undertaking such fundamental change."

Bill 155 recognizes that the people of Ontario deserve that level of certainty. Ontarians will not have to make a decision of this magnitude in a vacuum.

Si l'assemblée des citoyens recommande de changer notre système électoral, nous nous engagerons à fournir à la population ontarienne les renseignements factuels et neutres dont elle aura besoin pour prendre une décision informée pendant le référendum.

The proposed legislation also establishes that if a referendum is held, cabinet will set the referendum question. This legislation ensures that the question will be clear, concise and impartial. The recommendation of the citizens' assembly will form the basis of the referendum question.

Si une nette majorité de la population ontarienne est favorable au changement, le gouvernement sera lié par les résultats et il devra instaurer le système recommandé par l'assemblée des citoyens. La loi proposée sur le référendum exige du gouvernement qu'il dépose un projet de loi avant le 31 décembre 2008 en vue de mettre en oeuvre le système électoral recommandé par l'assemblée des citoyens.

It's up to Ontarians to decide which electoral system best reflects their values. Our responsibility is to ensure that the voices are heard loud and clear. This bill supports our vision of Ontario's democracy as one where each citizen participates in building a better society, and their government takes responsibility for strengthening the voice of the citizens they serve.

I would now like to acknowledge the task currently being undertaken by the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform. We have taken historic steps to give all citizens a more meaningful voice in shaping Ontario's democracy than ever before. Encouraging meaningful participation in Ontario's democracy is the foundation of our government's democratic renewal agenda. We believe that when citizens are engaged, governments make the best choices. That's why we've established the Citizens'

Assembly on Electoral Reform. At the end of the process, the assembly will make a recommendation on which electoral system they think would best serve our province.

This legislation is recognition of the importance of the work of the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform. The citizens' assembly is investing much time and effort in making their recommendation. The threshold in the proposed legislation reflects the significance of this decision as well as the significance of the task we gave to the citizens' assembly.

The assembly is a new form of decision-making that is empowering citizens as never before. No government in this province has ever given citizens this kind of opportunity to shape Ontario's democracy.

The independent citizens' assembly is composed of 103 Ontarians and the chair, George Thomson. The members were chosen at random by Elections Ontario from the permanent register of electors. The assembly represents a cross-section of the province's population. All members are contributing their unique perspectives, their creativity, their talent and range of experience to the work of the assembly.

This is a citizen-led process of learning, listening and deliberating. Members have been attending two public weekend meetings each month, where they have been learning about Ontario's electoral system and other systems.

Beginning in December, the assembly members will lead public consultations in cities, towns and community centres across the province. Ontarians will exchange ideas about electoral reform and make their views known to assembly members. They will also be invited to submit written submissions to the assembly.

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The next step for the citizens' assembly will be to assess Ontario's current system and others and recommend whether Ontario should keep the current system or adopt a new one. The assembly will consider the values of Ontarians as it examines various electoral systems. In addition, the assembly has been asked to consider a number of values and principles in their deliberations. These include voter choice, fairness of representation, and stable and effective government. These are some of the important fundamentals that underlie democratic systems here and around the world. The assembly will determine the most relevant values and principles for Ontario in making its decision.

During the final deliberation period, assembly members will consider everything they have learned. The final report will outline the assembly's recommendation about whether Ontario should keep the current electoral system or adopt a new one. If they opt for a different electoral system than our current one, they will be compelled to identify clearly their preferred system. The report will be delivered to the government on or before May 15, 2007.

Because we want the dialogue on electoral reform to include the province's full range of voices, we provided support for the Students' Assembly on Electoral Reform.

This innovative project is allowing young Ontarians across the province to become actively involved in the issue of electoral reform. The Students' Assembly on Electoral Reform is a parallel citizens' assembly process for Ontario high school students. It is empowering young Ontarians by giving them a say in the electoral reform process in a way that is interactive, youth-focused and inclusive. Our coordinating partners from the students' assembly have created ways for young Ontarians to participate in the debate on electoral reform that are consistent with their values, their lifestyle and their expectations. Yesterday, I was fortunate to meet with the 103 enthusiastic students' assembly members. They toured the Legislature and met with a number of MPPs before leaving for their conference. This weekend, they will learn about the current electoral system and alternative electoral systems, and consider which systems best reflect their values.

At the same time, in high schools across Ontario, students will be learning about electoral systems using curriculum materials provided by the students' assembly project. Once they have had these classroom discussions, students will have an opportunity to cast their vote for their preferred electoral system. This initiative is designed to reinvigorate and heighten our young Ontarians' understanding of our democratic system.

The work of the students' assembly and the feedback from the classroom assemblies will culminate in a report that will be submitted to the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform in February 2007. I would urge all of my colleagues to encourage this innovative experiment in youth engagement and civic learning.

Encouraging meaningful participation in Ontario's democracy is the core of our government's democratic renewal agenda. Here are just a few of our government's accomplishments:

We've amended the province's election laws and set scheduled election dates because we believe that citizens should know when elections will be held. Provincial elections will be held every four years. Ontario's next provincial election will be held in October 2007.

We have improved the transparency of our political process by requiring real-time public disclosure of political contributions of \$100 and more to political parties and leadership candidates retroactive to January 1, 2004. This has contributed to making Ontario a leader in transparency and accountability. Our real-time disclosure is the first of its kind in Canada and allows Ontarians quick and easy access by tracking contributions through the Internet. We believe citizens should know how political parties are financed.

We have preserved 11 ridings in the north and increased the number of southern ridings from 92 to 96. As a result, Ontarians will send 107 MPPs to Queen's Park in the next provincial general election: 11 for the north and 96 for the south. We believe every region of Ontario is significant and has an important role to play in building a strong and prosperous province, and we also believe that in order to do so, every region needs to be represented in this Legislature.

Today, we are talking about legislation that requires a referendum on electoral reform to be held if a change is recommended by the citizens' assembly.

Toutes ces mesures améliorent le fonctionnement de la démocratie de l'Ontario. The various initiatives we are undertaking and have undertaken are a testimony to our trust in the Ontario people and our belief that, working together, we can make Ontario's democracy stronger.

This legislation is about our trust that the people of Ontario will make the best decision for the province. We trust the people of Ontario to approach this historic task thoughtfully and carefully and to choose a course of action that will ensure that Ontario continues to have a strong, vital democracy for the future.

I'm very proud to introduce this bill today and urge my colleagues to join me in supporting it.

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): As the parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for democratic renewal, it is my pleasure today to rise in support of Bill 155, the Electoral System Referendum Act, 2006.

The bill that is being debated here today will ensure that if a referendum is held on electoral reform, we will have a legitimate process in place that will provide Ontarians with a very clear outcome. I'm very proud to speak on a piece of legislation that so closely illustrates our government's belief that the shape of Ontario's democracy is a matter for Ontarians to decide.

A key goal in developing this proposed legislation was to set a decision rule that was fair and transparent to all Ontarians and suitable for our province. This legislation does not presume any outcome. We do not know whether any change will be recommended by the citizens' assembly or what any recommendation might be. The decision rule proposed in this piece of legislation recognizes the foundational significance of this decision.

This legislation, if it were passed, would make it possible for Ontarians to determine which electoral system best reflects their values. Our responsibility in this Legislature is to ensure that citizens' voices are heard loud and clear.

I'd like to take this opportunity to explain how the referendum vote would be administered. The legislation is based on our existing Election Act process. The referendum would be administered by Elections Ontario in a way that maintains the integrity of both the election and the referendum. We recognize the need to make sure that Ontarians have confidence in this election. This bill acknowledges the importance of safeguarding the integrity of both the referendum process and the election. If it were passed, this bill would build on our existing election process and allow a referendum to take place with all of the same safeguards and protections. For example, the powers of candidates and their scrutineers for the election would not change. Candidates and their scrutineers would continue to be able to challenge electors and scrutinize the voting and vote-counting process.

The referendum question would be on a separate, visually distinctive ballot, easily and identifiably differ-

ent from the election ballot. A candidate or a candidate's scrutineer would only be permitted to object to an election ballot and not a referendum ballot. From this, a referendum scrutineer would not be able to challenge an elector's right to vote—different from an election ballot—but they would only be able to scrutinize the referendum voting and vote-counting process.

This proposed legislation would also allow the government to make rules regarding the referendum campaign and referendum campaign finances. The regulations would impose requirements on people and entities who wish to campaign on the issue of the referendum. They could set spending and contribution limits, including advertising, reporting and record-keeping requirements, similar to those governing parties and candidates in the Election Finances Act.

This is all in an effort to ensure that, should a referendum be necessary, the campaign is carried out in a fair manner so that Ontarians will be equipped with the information they want and need so they can make choices for themselves in a referendum.

This bill supports our vision of an Ontario democracy as one where citizen participants build a better society, and that their government takes responsibility for strengthening the voice of the citizens we all serve. A healthy democracy encourages a multitude of voices, and these rules will enable a lively referendum debate and establish an inclusive process that is fair and transparent.

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The introduction of this bill represents the latest step in Ontario's democratic renewal agenda. I'd like to take this opportunity today to highlight some of our other democratic renewal achievements. We have the most ambitious democratic renewal agenda in our province's history, and we've made significant progress in strengthening Ontario's democracy.

For example, we've extended the powers of the Auditor General to conduct value-for-money audits of institutions in the broader public sector. We believe the taxpayers' money should be spent wisely.

We've enacted a law banning partisan government advertising.

We've required that cabinet ministers attend question period at least two thirds of the time. We believe that all ministers should be in the Legislature, on the job, and accountable for their work.

We've required the Minister of Finance to release a pre-election report about Ontario's finances to the Auditor General for an independent review as part of our commitment to transparency and accountability.

As well, we've expanded the freedom-of-information and salary disclosure laws to cover Hydro One and Ontario Power Generation, to encourage responsible spending in the future.

Now we've introduced legislation that requires a referendum on electoral reform to be held if the citizens' assembly recommends change.

By passing this legislation, we will be telling Ontarians that their participation in this historic initiative will

have a meaningful impact on this government's decisions. As Minister Bountrogianni mentioned earlier, public consultations will be beginning next week, the first in my hometown of Brampton Centre. I'd like to urge Ontarians to find out where their citizen-led consultation is scheduled to appear in their community and to make their views known to the assembly-makers.

For the first time in our province's history, Ontarians are being asked to participate in a full, open debate on our electoral system. This won't happen again. It's an unprecedented opportunity for Ontarians to participate in strengthening Ontario's democracy. No government in this province has ever given citizens this kind of opportunity to shape how their government works. It's a healthy and an exciting process. It's democracy in action, a democracy that belongs to the citizens of Ontario, not just their elected officials.

With the establishment of the citizens' assembly and the introduction of this legislation, our government is making it clear that the shape of Ontario's democracy is a matter for Ontarians to decide. As I said, this is historic legislation. I urge the members of this House to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker: It's time for questions and comments.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): The minister and the member are quite correct: This is a very historic piece of legislation. The last time that a referendum was held in this province was back in 1921—80 years—and we're having a new referendum proposed with this bill.

Over that period of time when they introduced this legislation, the minister and her parliamentary assistant could only fill about 20 or 21 minutes of their hour opening statement. On something that is this momentous, something that is this important to Ontarians, you'd think that the government of the day would find some way to speak for about an hour, which is their allotted time, in order to inform Ontarians what the purpose of this is, what the process of this is, how it's going to affect them. You'd think they would use the opening statement to at least set some kind of a ground rule as to how this piece of legislation is going to be enacted and what effect it's going to have on the people of Ontario, either pro or con.

It is an extremely important piece of legislation. It's going to change the way that we're governed. Although we've been governed, I think, overall extremely well in the province of Ontario, this government feels that there's some necessity to re-examine the way that governance takes place. I just find it absolutely astonishing that the minister of the day can't find enough to say about this bill to fill more than 10 or 11 minutes. I think that's a comment on the importance of this legislation and the importance this government places on this legislation. I don't think they're placing nearly enough importance on it. As I will say in a few minutes, there are a lot of questions around this piece of legislation that have not been answered and that are being left to a time down the road to be addressed, and that's too bad. There was a lot of groundwork that had to be done prior to this piece of

legislation being instituted. I'll be glad to elucidate on those comments later.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches—East York): I listened to both of the debaters intently. I've only got two minutes, so I want to zero in on one of the comments made by the Minister of Democratic Renewal. She quoted Mr. John Ibbitson as if he was some kind of expert. Is this not the same John Ibbitson who has repeatedly said in his columns that we should not change our electoral process? Is this not the same John Ibbitson and the same *Globe and Mail* that have opined on the editorial pages that everything is hunky-dory the way we have it here in Ontario? Is this not the same John Ibbitson?

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: No, you're wrong.

Mr. Prue: I'm waiting to hear what you have to say about this, because in the editorial comments of that newspaper and in the writings of John Ibbitson that I remember, the same as the writings of many other columnists who follow the goings-on of this Legislature, the support for changing the electoral system is not high.

I have to question why you would quote such a person as being an authority. Certainly in my view he has no academic credentials to say what he's said and he has no rationale to say what he's said other than that he thinks this may be a monumental change. I would ask the minister to question and to think about the other referenda that have taken place in this country over a great many years, not one of which, until the BC example, required 60%. I intend to speak at some length about why the BC process failed and why this minister is seizing upon a failed process in order to ensure that this process in Ontario fails as well.

I feel very sadly for all of those 103 individuals who are spending the next 26 weeks trying to come up with a new system when, in the end, the system that you have before us today is designed so that whatever they recommend will never see the light of day.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I indeed listened very carefully to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and the member from Brampton Centre. I would like to remind my colleagues that the comment was made about the shortness of the address by the two members. But I've always remembered President Lincoln's Gettysburg address. It was very short, but it has historical proportions because it brought about the emancipation of African-Americans and the elimination of slavery. So we have to look at speeches in context. Lincoln's Gettysburg address was very short but high in content, as were the speeches today from the minister and my colleague the member from Brampton Centre.

I look forward to those 103 individuals who will be doing very important work over the next 26 weeks, who will be looking with great scrutiny at the first-past-the-post system that is currently used here in the province of Ontario, an opportunity to look at the parliamentary committee that my good friend the member from Beaches—East York was a member of and that spent some time touring the world, looking at systems in other countries, and an opportunity to look at what improvements poten-

tially could be made if we do retain the first-past-the-post system.

From time to time I hear from people, particularly from Trent University, who have taken some real interest in this as a study, suggesting that perhaps here in Ontario, with the three parties involved, on some pieces of legislation we perhaps need a conference system, an issue or a mechanism that is used by the American Congress, the House of Representatives and the Senate, where there are bills that the parties, the Republicans and the Democrats in that case, have a mutual interest to move forward. There are reforms we can make to the first-past-the-post system.

1610

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the senior member from Simcoe—Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe—Grey): I seem to get more senior every Thursday afternoon when you're in the Chair, Mr. Speaker. I'm losing my hair.

I just want to comment briefly. I agree with some of the comments that have been made—and people should know this—that if there is a referendum, there is no guarantee that that referendum and the results of that referendum will ever come into law. There's no obligation on the government after the referendum to actually put it into law.

But I do want to say that it's kind of a horrible system you have set up here. I don't know who the citizen reps are in my riding. It's to address low voter turnout, but I can tell you that in the elections like the free trade election, where people have a real interest and a real stake, we saw tremendously high voter turnout in the late 1980s—1988 election. I find that people don't want to be forced to vote, but if they have a real issue they'll come forward.

I've held four town hall meetings in my riding in the last month, on angling and hunting, justice issues, agriculture issues and health care. You would expect, because the long gun registry is out there, that they packed the Creemore Legion, because people are very concerned about that issue. For agriculture, we got a good turnout. We didn't get such a good turnout on justice issues. We had a lot of lawyers show up and a lot of people just didn't have a lot of things to say to me about that. Of course, we got a good turnout for health care.

I think people turn out to vote when they feel there's a real issue. I don't see why low voter turnout is necessarily a bad thing. It's taken carte blanche by academics and professors and that, that somehow low voter turnout is a bad thing. I don't think it's a bad thing. In a free and democratic society, if people are mad at me and they want to get rid of me, they'll turn out. If they're mad at me, they'll write me letters and e-mails. But otherwise, most people want us to do our jobs, do a good job for them and to stay out of their lives and out of their faces until they need something changed or something done. As I said, at the end of the day, if you've got people locked in a room for 18 months, of course they're going to recommend change; that's human nature.

The Acting Speaker: It's time for a response. The Chair recognizes the minister.

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: I'd like to thank all my colleagues for their responses and also for their advice on this. I'd like to thank the member of the official opposition for reminding us how special this actually is as far as how often it has occurred in the last 100 years. This is basically the second time. It is very important, and I'm really proud that our government is doing it. I'm really happy to see there are people across the Legislature engaged in this issue.

Yesterday we had the students' assembly here. It made me happy and excited and a little bit sad at what happens to us as we grow older and how we grow jaded and cynical. They were wonderful, they were excited, they were looking forward to their weekend conference to learn about the electoral systems, to discuss what is best for Ontario—if what we have now is best. They asked me some very intelligent questions right there at the reception, which made me realize and believe and get reminded of how valuable our young people are and how, when you do have an open and clear mind, miracles can occur.

I told them I really depended on them, and our government depended on them and Ontario depends on them to give really good advice to the citizens' assembly. I could just tell by the questions they were asking me that they were going to take this very seriously, that the deliberations would be taken very seriously. One student asked me, "Well, what's wrong with what we have now?" That's a good question. I think the member from the official opposition asked me that question tonight. Another student said, "Why is the threshold the way it is?" I gave him my opinion on that, and he was listening carefully.

All in all, I think they're going to have wonderful debates—agreements, disagreements. But what I did see was amazing unity in the sense that they knew they were doing something important. These are kids who range from 14 to 18. I have two kids, a 15-year-old and an 18-year-old—and I know that many of us have raised kids—so I know what kids at that stage are capable of doing, and sometimes not doing. But I was really heartened to know that we had the *crème de la crème* in that room last night and they will be giving very good advice to the citizens' assembly. I'm very excited to be leading this for the government and very honoured that the Premier gave me this responsibility.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Chudleigh: I'd like to ask for unanimous consent to stand down our lead speaker so he can speak at a later time.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Mr. Chudleigh: A few minutes ago I was talking about how important this is. The last referendum we had in this province was in 1921. That was on the issue of alcohol and the availability of alcohol and whether or not we should move to a system of prohibition. The people of

Ontario agreed that there should be a prohibition on alcohol and its distribution, and I've often wondered why. I've often wondered what the social situation was in that time. I can imagine that in 1921 in Ontario, there would have been a huge number of soldiers back in those days, about 10% of our country's population—I think a little more than that, maybe 15%. I think Canada had about six million people in the 1920s, and I think we had almost 100,000 soldiers—no; more than that. We had 250,000 soldiers in the Second World War, so whatever percentage that is. There was a huge percentage of them.

They came back, and of course they had looked into the abyss. They had been to hell and wandered around in it for two, three or four years of their lives. It was a terrible time and terrible type of warfare. No one could come back from that warfare without being negatively affected mentally, and most often physically as well.

I can imagine how some of these people may have turned to alcohol to dull their senses and to dull their memories of that terrible time that they had just come through. That would have caused tremendous social upheaval at the time, and also difficulty within that community of Canada in those days, where I think the church played a much larger role than it does today. Given those kinds of factors that Ontario was faced with, the government of the day decided that it needed a decision made, and one they weren't willing to make themselves. They wanted someone else to make this decision for them, so they came up with the idea of a referendum. This absolved the government of the day of the responsibility for it. It wasn't their fault that the country went dry or went wet in various counties across Ontario. The politicians of the day absolved themselves of that very difficult decision in a very difficult time.

I don't see those parallels here today. I don't see the parallels of the difficulty we have in governance today. I agree somewhat with the member for Simcoe—Grey, who talked about low voter turnout as something that wasn't necessarily bad. I would like to see a higher voter turnout, as I think we all would. But certainly, when the electorate are satisfied with the things that are going on and are not intimately involved on a day-to-day, week-to-week or even month-to-month basis with government, it's easy to imagine how in their busy lives they can let an election day slip away without actually casting their vote.

We came through a municipal election, and I think we saw a number of places in Ontario where there was a very high voter turnout based on very important races. People were concerned, they were upset or they were enthusiastic about the support of a mayor or a councillor, or they were upset with the performance of a mayor or a councillor—or a board of education—and they turned out in rather large numbers to correct the situation as they saw it, either to re-elect the person or to see that someone else was elected. Voter turnout I think is a reflection of the way in which governments have operated.

To suggest that voter turnout can be impacted by the way we conduct those elections, whether they be the so-

called first past the post or whether they be proportional representation—if you looked around the world to where proportional representation exists and where first past the post exists, I don't think the experience or history of those places that have one system or the other would indicate that there is a higher turnout, that there is greater voter interest or that there is a greater public interest in elections. I don't think you would see that in those statistics. I haven't seen those statistics specifically, but the readings that I've done on proportional representation don't seem to indicate that there is a huge difference in the voter turnout in those particular areas.

1620

One thing that concerns me greatly about proportional representation—and there are many different types of proportional representation. That's one of the things that is confusing: We don't really know what type of proportional representation we're debating here. That's going to be determined by a citizens' assembly of one person from each riding, with the exception of my riding. As it turns out, the part of my riding that I'm losing in redistribution is where the member on the citizens' assembly lives, and therefore in my new riding of Halton, they don't have a member on the committee. However, that's the way the members' committee was struck, and these members are going to decide whether or not we need this change, and if we do need this change or suggest this change, they're going to decide what type of proportional representation or what type of first-past-the-post election we're going to have. Again, I think that's abdicating the responsibilities of this House. However, the one thing that really concerns me is that in most cases of proportional representation, there would be people sitting in this Legislature who were not elected by a specific riding. That gives me a great deal of concern. For—137 years?

Interjection.

Mr. Chudleigh: It's 103 years? We've been here longer than that. From 1871—I think that was the first sitting of this Legislature—until today, every person who has sat in this House has been elected within a constituency, within a riding. I think that's very much a part of our democratic history. That's very much a part of how this country and this province have been governed. To move away from that principle, that everyone who sits in this House should be elected from a riding or from a constituency—I think that's a very, very important piece of democracy that we should never, never lose sight of.

The other thing that's concerning about proportional representation, and I see this in other countries that have this system—you see it in Italy, as one; you see it in Israel; you see it in New Zealand. Those governments seem to get a lot of press in this country. When they elect, very seldom do they have a clear majority; that very seldom happens. But after the election, it's up to the major party, usually the party that won the most seats, to put together what they call a coalition and to attract other parties to their cause so that they can have a 51% vote in

the House and therefore be able to maintain themselves. Of course, the largest party may have 40% of the vote; they may have 35%; they may have 45% of the vote. They're going to go to another party which they think they can work with in order to attract that other 6% or 7% or 15% that they need. Now, when you have those discussions with another party, obviously, if you're the smaller of the parties, you're going to say, "Well, yes, we might support you, but in order to garner our support, we would like you to do this."

Well, I can guarantee you that whatever "this" is going to be, "this" is going to cost the taxpayers of Ontario a lot of money. And if a party of an environmental nature were to become part of that affiliated government, they may ask for very, very strong environmental regulations in order to gain their support—not a bad thing in and of itself; however, it could be very, very expensive. And the party that has 40% in the House is going to buy that support with public money. It's easy to spend someone else's money, especially when it's government money. There seems to be a connotation about government money as being free and easy. I think we know all too well in this place, we certainly know in this party, that government money is not free and easy; government money is hard-earned taxpayers' money. There's no such thing as government money; it comes from taxpayers. And when it is spent frivolously or without due thought or due control, that's a bad thing for government. If you're putting together coalition governments, I can't help but think that there will be deals made, and those deals will be financed with taxpayers' money. That's another reason why I have some real concerns about proportional representation. I think it's going to be a very expensive form of government. It's going to cost more than the government that we have in place today.

Another point that I would like to suggest to the minister is that during a referendum we may very well have situations at the time of the election, and that would be on October 4, 2007—there may be events that lead up to that time that influence, for a short period of time, the mindset of a voter. They may have huge concerns about the current government. Maybe not, but for the sake of argument, they might have these huge concerns about the government. I think this would influence a voter to vote in favour of a referendum because they're unhappy with the current government. That's something that may influence the outcome of a referendum, influence the way Canadians or Ontarians may be governed over a long period of time, and I think that influence might be very short-lived. They might vote completely differently in three months or six months or even a couple of weeks down the road.

So I would like to suggest to the minister that no matter what happens with the referendum, there is a second referendum after some period of time, after some period of test time—it might be two elections, it might be one election or it might be a specific number of years, but after some period of time; certainly less than 10 years—I would like to see a second referendum put in place so

that people can make a judgment as to whether they did a good thing on October 4, 2007, or whether they did a bad thing and they'd want to correct it. The position of correcting—I'm not saying you might want to go back to the old system that we had, the first past the post; you might want to tweak or adjust the system to get rid of some of the concerns that have been raised by people or have become evident over that period of time. I think a sober second thought would be a very good thing to introduce into this referendum by having a second referendum.

Interjection.

Mr. Chudleigh: No, I'm not suggesting that we have a Senate in Ontario. I think that one Senate in this country is probably too much—one too many, perhaps. But Ottawa is working on that. They're working on making that more democratic. They've moved a lot further in the last eight months than they had in the previous 80 years. We look forward to maybe having a Senate that would be representative of the people of Canada.

Another concern that I have, and I mentioned this briefly before, is that the rules around the referendum are yet to be written. The only thing that's in the act is that the Lieutenant Governor in Council will write the question. There is nothing in place to have that question debated or appealed. I'm not of the opinion that one man or one person or one group can write a question and think of all possible issues that might be affected by that question. I would like to see that some form of appeal or some form of debate around that question be put. That could also form part of the educational aspect that takes place around the question. Again, this is not in the rules, as to whether or not this question will be put and who is going to do the education of the public on the issue of the question. There will be some groups who will be for proportional representation and there will be some groups that are against it. Both of those groups, I would think, would have narrow arguments concerning the overall good or bad of the overall governance of that system. So having some form of publicly financed non-partisan education around that question I think would be a very, very valuable thing, to make sure that the conditions under which the question is asked and the influence that might be brought to bear on the question is fair and balanced, and there's some reference that people can go to to get the facts of the matter. If there isn't some system of laying out the facts in a fair and equitable way, it's like a vacuum of information, and all kinds of innuendo and other words that I can't use in this House flow in to fill that vacuum, so people aren't left with a clear and concise understanding of exactly what they're voting for.

1630

One of the other problems I have that I alluded to when I opened my remarks is that the citizens' assembly is very much replacing a bona fide, good, deep debate that should happen in this House. That's why we were elected. We were elected to govern Ontario, and this particular bill is talking about the very essence of

governing this province, and yet we're putting it off to another committee. Another committee might have a discussion on it and bring that discussion back to this House for further debate so that we knew all aspects from a broad committee, we knew all aspects of the questions, and we could sit and debate those aspects in this House. But as the government of the day did in 1921, because they had a problem they couldn't handle, we are doing much the same today with this bill. I think this bill is taking away some of the authority of this House, and that gives me very, very great concern. Members of this House have to be accountable to their constituents, and I don't think this bill helps me be responsible to my constituents.

There is one man in Georgetown, who is not in my new riding, who is making decisions for the constituents who live in my riding on this particular piece of legislation. He was not elected. I'm not sure how he was chosen, if he came out of the phone book or what he was doing. All the people who only have cellphones or have unlisted numbers weren't eligible. I don't know how they picked those people. But one name came out of the hat and he wasn't elected, and I have concerns. The very essence of our system is that you are elected by the people and you have to represent their wishes or you lose your privilege of being elected. This didn't happen in that case, and yet that person is going to make some very, very momentous decisions for the people of my riding, and that gives me very great concern that the business of this House is being put off to another committee.

Another concern is that I don't see a huge outcry from the people of Ontario that we have to change the system. I've been through three elections in this province and I've never once heard people demanding that we change the system in Ontario. There isn't a hue and cry out there to change the system in Ontario. There have been some debates about it, but it's very, very minimal as far as the issues that are brought to the attention of MPPs, certainly in my riding.

Those are just about my comments concerning this particular issue. I'm very concerned that the timelines on this bill are somewhat short when we are looking at a question that could change the way this province is governed for the next 100 years.

The Acting Speaker: It's time for questions and comments.

Mr. Prue: I listened intently again to the debate from the member from Halton, and he skirted around many times on the actual purport of this bill. He was talking about proportional representation. Of course, this bill cannot surmise that the citizens' assembly will choose proportional representation or, if they choose it, what type of proportional representation. But then he went on to talk about the old bugaboo about minority governments having to form coalitions. He said—and I listened to it—in every case it's going to cost the taxpayers more. I would suggest that he take a look at some of the coalition governments of Germany, where the Christian Democrats have forged alliances with the Free Demo-

crats, who are slightly to the right of them. In order to gain their support, they have to do things like tax cuts. You will see that what you are saying is not necessarily the corollary; it does not necessarily flow that way. It flows on who you are making the alignment with. So the bugaboo isn't there, and I don't even know that it should have been discussed in the first place or why I rose to the bait when you said that. But I cannot accept that it's true.

The second one: He did make reference to a second referendum to be held within 10 years. I would concur with that idea. It's not in the legislation, but it certainly was the 10th recommendation that was made by the select all-party committee, which recommended that within 10 years—between the third and fourth elections—there should be a very careful look at whether or not the system is working. Certainly, that was the experience in New Zealand after two elections. They had that within the body of their bill. Although it did not go back to the citizens to vote, there was a fulsome debate in Parliament as to whether or not the process had worked well. I think that should have been contained in this bill as well.

Mrs. Jeffrey: I'm glad to join this conversation, because I heard some things in the earlier speech that I wanted to correct and comment on. We watched very closely in British Columbia when they had a citizens' assembly. They had 160 British Columbians, and they were asked to think about what kind of democracy they wanted in their province. We're asking Ontarians to do the same thing. The question was not what they personally wanted but what they thought would be best for our province as a whole.

Our independent citizens' assembly is composed of 103 Ontarians and the chair, George Thomson, a very well respected individual. The members were chosen at random, not from the phone book but by Elections Ontario from the permanent register of electors.

I think citizens want to be involved in making important decisions. Too often they feel left out, on the sidelines while others debate the issues that affect their lives. Given an opportunity to make a contribution, they can make a very good decision and freely give of their time and their talents. Ordinary citizens can master complex decisions and materials. It's too easy to assume that only experts know enough to make decisions on specialized topics. In fact, regular citizens see the fundamental issues that are involved and can do the work necessary to make a really informed and reasoned decision.

I believe that the Premier's instincts were right about engaging Ontarians to talk about this very important subject. The decision that the citizens' assembly comes back with next spring will be one that we create a very clear question on, will be binding to our government. It is a very serious decision, and I think they should be engaged in this. I think it's a good decision to have made.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I'm pleased to rise and comment on my colleague from Halton's comments on Bill 155, the Electoral System

Referendum Act, 2006. Just for those at home, it provides that "If the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform recommends the adoption of an electoral system different from Ontario's current one, a referendum on the recommended electoral system shall be held in conjunction with the 2007 general election."

Interjections.

Ms. Scott: I know that it's a good and healthy debate—that's still occurring to my side here—in the Legislature. I appreciate the two individuals who have been chosen from my riding. One, Marie McLaren, is the senior representative—can I say that?—who is on the board and lives in the Buckhorn area close to the member from Peterborough, to our boundaries that meet there; and the young lady, Maria Reesor, who was here yesterday, whom I didn't have the opportunity to speak with yesterday. She's quite excited about being on the Students' Assembly on Electoral Reform. She attends Fenelon Falls high school, which is where I attended, and is very encouraged. I note that both of the selections from my riding are women. I'm sure that has nothing to do with that.

1640

Electoral system reform and the referendum act are interesting topics. Other countries have been mentioned: Have they been successful? Does it increase voter turnout? Does it get more women representatives? There are different forms of proportional representation that may be looked at. Is a first-past-the-post system the right way? As my colleague from Simcoe–Grey mentioned, is there something wrong with low voter turnout? You're right: If people are angry enough, they're going to come out and they're either going to vote against us or for us.

Those are some of the things that were brought up by my colleague from Halton and the comments we have on some amendments we'd like to see.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): It's a pleasure to participate a little bit in the debate. I want to say that I appreciate the comments from the member from Halton. I don't think I agree with many of them, but I appreciate that he made the contribution he did.

I guess there are two points I want to make. I don't know what the citizens' assembly is going to come up with in terms of a system, but I do think that a change is required. I myself, on a personal level, am certainly not opposed to a system of proportional representation, recognizing that what is absolutely necessary is to ensure that the threshold is high enough so you don't have some of the instability you see in countries that use PR as a system. I feel that way because, after having been here some time—not as long as Mr. Phillips, who has been in the Legislature for some long time—through five elections and through three different governments, it's fair to say that in each of those governments, the number of seats that were assigned to the government did not reflect voter preference and did not reflect the percentage of the vote that that particular party got. They got those seats on the basis of having the highest number of votes in that riding, and it didn't matter if it was two or three or four. But that certainly doesn't reflect voter preference.

What I see happening in my riding is that more and more people are feeling like their vote doesn't count. If they think their vote doesn't count, they're not interested in participating in the political process any more. I remain very concerned about the low level of voter participation at the municipal, provincial and federal levels. I think that is a real difficulty our democracy is facing. We need to find a different way to engage people, and I think a system of PR would do that.

I also disagreed with him in terms of PR costing us more. But if I think back to some of the minority governments—I may make a mistake here and somebody's going to correct me—at the federal level, it seems to me that how we got the Canada pension plan in the first place and unemployment insurance—

Mr. Prue: And medicare.

Ms. Martel: —and also medicare was through minority governments. So I don't see that as a cost; I certainly see that as an incredible benefit to Canadians. The same, I think, could be said of some of the minority governments that we've seen here in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: It's time for a response.

Mr. Chudleigh: I appreciate the comments from the four members, who cover the province pretty well: Beaches—East York, Brampton, Haliburton and Nickel Belt. Now, if we had proportional representation here, we might have had four members speaking who didn't have a constituency, who weren't elected members of this House, who were appointed through the process. It could happen from the list of party names, and they wouldn't have covered the province.

The other concern I have is, there was mention of the 103-plus-one members of the citizens' assembly. If you're doing a poll in this province, if you want a really accurate poll, you'd better have about 450 respondents to your poll. If you want to get even more accurate than that, you can go up to 1,000 respondents, and then you're accurate to within plus or minus 3%, 19 times out of 20. But if you have a smaller poll than that, you might be accurate to within plus or minus 7% or 8%. I would expect that 103 would be in that 8% or 9% accuracy rate, and that would equate 19 out of 20 times. That's a 5% margin of error.

As a citizen of Ontario, you'll want to ask yourself, are you willing to risk the next 100 years of Ontario's governance on the chance that you're going to be accurate 19 out of 20 times? I don't want to and I don't think a lot of people in my riding want to. I think there are some very vocal people. We heard from the third party that they're very much in favour of this. Yes, it would benefit their party, and I can understand how they're in favour of it. But I don't think the majority of Ontarians would support this bill.

The Acting Speaker: It's time for further debate.

Mr. Prue: I have spent a great deal of time studying this as a student of political science my whole life. In university, we spent a great many hours debating this kind of system—

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): So you're the expert.

Mr. Prue: I might be the expert—a great many hours debating how the system in Ontario and Canada could be reformed. So I've been looking forward to this date, probably my whole life, I would tell you, to see what is going to happen.

I want to start out, first of all, with the positives; I always try to state the positives. One of the positive things that has happened here is the whole system of asking ordinary citizens to come forward and look at the issue. This is not going to be looked at in the confines of this House, and whether it's good for the Conservative Party or the New Democrats or the Liberals. This is going to be looked at by ordinary citizens who are going to say what is best for the constituency of Ontario, what is best for me as a citizen. How can I elect better people to sit in the Legislature? How can my opinions be better enforced? How can they be better represented? So I welcome the fact, and I don't question the fact for a minute, that 103 people have been chosen at random to give their opinions and to make their opinions known.

There was a little bit of a glitch—I think it's minor, but I just want to state it for the record—inasmuch as the people were chosen from the permanent voters list. Sadly, what that's done is that in three years, we've had a lot of new people become citizens of the country who would not have been on the list before. We had a lot of people who were 15 or 16 or 17 years old during the last election who would now be added to the list but who are not on the permanent voters list. I know a system had to be developed, and I don't know how it could have been done any better, but sadly, those new Canadians and those young people who have recently turned of voting age have not been given a full opportunity to participate. Having said that, I don't know what else the government could have done, so I'm not going to say it was a mistake. I'm just going to say that there were certain people who perhaps did not get the same opportunity as those who have been around longer or who were older.

I do commend the government for choosing equal numbers of women and men. A system had to be designed which was different from British Columbia, because I understand the synergy and I understand trying to keep the volume of people in the assembly to 103. In British Columbia they chose one man and one woman from each riding, but they only have 55 ridings, and ours will be about the same size. I also need to say that British Columbia went out of its way to pick an aboriginal person. I have not checked the list to see whether or not we have one.

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: The minister is indicating in the affirmative, so I'm very glad to see that the First Nations are represented on this issue, because if anyone has a stake in this, surely they do.

This citizens' assembly will be making a recommendation, and I do not want to presuppose it. There's lots of debate going around here, either in the formal part of the debate or in members coming up and talking to me who don't like proportional representation, or who don't

like STV, which is the system used in Malta and in Ireland. Well, I don't think that's up to us to be debating here today, and I'm going to stay away from that. Whatever these people choose, they have to think that it is better than the system we have here. If they don't think there is a better system, I'm sure they will say, "We have the best of all systems," and that will be the end of the matter, although I must state that I find that highly unlikely, because the people who have put their name forward and have volunteered have volunteered to change the system. One has to expect they are not going to be satisfied with the status quo, so I am expecting at least some modicum of change in the final analysis.

The issue is very complex, and I am not surprised it's going to take 26 weeks for people to study and to understand. If I were to ask the members of this Legislature to describe the D'Hondt system by which STV candidates are elected, I don't think I could find a single member other than myself—

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: There's one indicating that he might know too. But this is a very complex system, and they're going to have to do some considerable study to understand it.

1650

The minister, to her credit, stated in scrums that she has never taken a political science course, but here she is spearheading this bill through. But I am glad that the 103 citizens are taking an in-depth, what can only be described as a second- or third-year political science course in excess—maybe two or three courses at once.

Mr. Wilson: Probably never been elected.

Mr. Prue: No, they've never been elected, but they're going to study—

Mr. Wilson: Don't know what they're talking about.

Mr. Prue: Okay. I think they may know what they're talking about by the time it's over, and I'm hoping they will, because I have great faith in the citizens of this province.

The sad reality, after having said all these glowing things, is that they are going to be doing work for 26 weeks; they're going to be making a recommendation which, sadly, may never see the light of day. It may never be passed, because there may not be a proportion of the citizens of this province who are willing to go along with it.

The minister has said 60% is fair, and she has quoted the eminent John Ibbotson as being the authority. I don't know where he gets to be the authority. I've never read any of his political science books. I've never seen that he attempted to describe the d'Hondt system, proportional representation, mixed-member proportional or anything else. All I know from his writings is that he does not believe that there should be any change. So of course he is in favour of an elevated level which will make the standard so high that it may be impossible for the citizens who actively and actually want change to ever see it happen. I feel sorry for those individuals, going through all this work for 26 weeks, if they are to present something that may not have a chance of actually passing.

This Legislature did something unusual, at least unusual for the time that I've been here, when it set up an all-party select committee to study this issue. This was a select committee not of the government but of the Legislature, and it was staffed with people who were to study this and come back with recommendations to the Legislature, come back with recommendations that the government might take hold of, and the recommendations were to be forwarded to the citizens in their assembly. The members of that committee were all people who I think had a fairly good and detailed knowledge, at least at the end, of what would constitute a valid referendum, what would constitute valid legislation, how the members of the citizens' assembly might come to their decisions, what kind of advice they might be given. And they studied jurisdictions in other places.

Those members—and I'm going to name them all, because two of them are now sitting in cabinet: the Chair, the member from Sarnia, Caroline Di Cocco, is now the Minister of Culture; the member from Don Valley West, Kathleen Wynne, is now the Minister of Education. We had other Liberal members on there; Mr. Arthurs, who is a PA to the finance minister. We had Mr. Richard Patten from Ottawa Centre, we had Monique Smith from Nipissing and Dr. Kuldip Kular from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale. Mr. Speaker, sometimes it helps to sit in the chair; you can remember where everybody is from without looking it up. On the opposition side were Mr. Norm Miller from Parry Sound-Muskoka and Mr. Norm Sterling from Nepean-Carleton. And of course, I was on there from the New Democratic Party.

We were ably—ably—advised by Anne Stokes, who was the clerk, and by Larry Johnston, who was the research officer. I might say, and I'm going to say this publicly, that Mr. Johnston was one of the finest researchers with whom I have ever had the privilege of working. He was diligent. He understood the issue in a way that very few people could. He took the time to explain it to the members of the committee whenever there was difficulty understanding complex electoral systems, and in the end he produced a report, with a couple of minor variations, that the all-party select committee agreed to unanimously. I want to underline that: unanimously. This was eight members, plus the Chair, which is nine, who agreed to all provisions—save and except two on which the Conservatives did not agree—agreed to every single recommendation and provision unanimously.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): Lanark-Carleton—Norm Sterling.

Mr. Prue: Thank you. Lanark-Carleton, not Nepean-Carleton. Thank you very much. I knew I'd goof up at least once.

Now, the purpose of this was to advise the Legislature with information and advice on potential changes to the electoral system. The minister, unfortunately, has chosen to disregard several of the key recommendations. We made 10. She chose to disregard several of them, and that's where I want to spend the bulk of my time. The

recommendations that were made clearly are not found within the four walls of this particular act.

The first one is subsection 3(1) of the act, which says, "The referendum question, in both English and French, shall be established by an order of the Lieutenant Governor in Council." This is contrary to what the all-party committee recommended. I hope the members of the Legislature understand how serious that first provision is. It ran contrary to what was said by the all-party committee in recommendation 6, which read, "Responsibility for the referendum question(s)—including the wording and number of questions to be asked, and the number of referendums to be held—rests ultimately with the Legislature, acting on the advice of the citizens' assembly, the select committee on electoral reform, and if required, Elections Ontario."

What this government has chosen to do is to take the question and the authority for making the question out of the hands of the Legislature, out of the hands of the citizens' committee, out of the hands of the neutral Elections Ontario, and make it a cabinet responsibility, make it the responsibility of one party and one very small group within that party. It is now a cabinet responsibility. This was not, and has never been, done in any other jurisdiction. This is an anomaly which I think many people in here should be genuinely shocked by when they look at it.

I went to see what they did in British Columbia, because the minister keeps saying that this is what they did in British Columbia. The responsibility for the referendum question in British Columbia was not decided by the Lieutenant Governor in Council of that province. The responsibility, and I'll read from the select committee report: "In British Columbia's referendum, the question (Should British Columbia change to the BC-SCV electoral system as recommended by the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform? Yes/No) appears to have been drafted by the assembly and accepted by the government. In the press release accompanying the announcement of the second referendum, scheduled for 2008, the BC government notes that 'A referendum question will be crafted by the government and will be debated and voted upon in the Legislature.'" That is September 2005.

While visiting the electoral commission office in Scotland, the committee learned about guidelines used by the office to advise the government on the objectivity and neutrality of the wording of referendum questions, and that was contained in Appendix D.

What has happened here is that this is being done by the Lieutenant Governor in Council—i.e., the cabinet—by regulation. There will be no debate in this House if this bill is passed. There will be no debate. Whatever the question that is put by the government at the time of the referendum, that will be the question. Will it be neutral? How do I know? Will it be fair or just? Will it purport to do one side versus the other? There will be no debate on this. It will be decided by the minister and her friends in cabinet. This is contrary to what they did in BC; it's

contrary to what they did in Scotland; it's contrary to what they did in New Zealand. In fact, I cannot find a single reference anywhere in the British Commonwealth for a government to take this action upon themselves and to leave the entire Legislature out of the process. It is a horrendous piece within this bill. I would hope the members opposite would look at this and convince the minister that this should be removed when and if this goes to committee.

The second issue: All of the lofty goals that were unanimous at the all-party committee have been ignored. Everything is now going to be done by regulation, by the government and by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. There will be no debate.

1700

BC thought it extremely fair, honest and upright to refer the matter to the Legislature, and they have adopted it. It's clear, then, in Scotland that the clear guidelines formed parts of what the government did. Nothing in this bill gives me any cause to consider that anything will happen, except that the government will do what it wants to do without hearing from anybody at all or being part of any debate to defend what they are doing.

The third aspect, which flows right from this, is: "The wording of the referendum question shall be clear, concise and impartial," as set out in the legislation. This is subsection 3(2). But the question immediately flows: Clear, concise and impartial by whose standard? The only standard that will be used is the Lieutenant Governor in Council's. Mr. Speaker, not you, nor I nor anyone else in this Legislature who is not in the cabinet will have a word to say about the question, and whether it is clear, concise or impartial will be in their thinking, not in the thinking of the duly elected people of this province.

The fourth issue, and it is the one that is most troubling to me, is the referendum standard: 60%. This failed the people of BC; it failed them miserably. It failed them in a way that should have sent shock waves throughout this Legislature, but in fact has been endorsed by this minister for the arcane reason, or the only one I've heard so far, that John Ibbittson likes it, and that because the standard is so high, we're going to make sure that at least 60% of the people vote for this or it's not going to happen at all.

When this was first introduced in British Columbia, the editorial opinion and the opinion of those who were most concerned—Fair Voting BC, the people who had been pushing for democratic reform for a number of years, other groups—was that the system was designed to fail, and indeed it did. It is not surprising, when you set a standard which is alien to us, when you set a standard which is alien throughout most of the world where the majority does not rule, and you set a standard that is so high that it is virtually impossible to see change take place, I will guarantee you, that the change never takes place. It was the considered opinion in British Columbia from the editorial writers, from the columnists, from the people who were involved that in fact nothing would ever happen of the referendum in British Columbia.

There were people who were opposed to the referendum openly stating and laughing that they were going to win—not that they could garner 50% plus one of the vote, but they could garner 40% plus one of the vote and make sure it didn't happen. In the end, the losers won and the winners lost. That's what is being said up here: "The losers shall win and the winners shall lose," because if you can't get 60%, which is unheard of and almost impossible in most jurisdictions when you are seeking to make change, then change will not happen.

Page 55 of the committee's recommendations set out some of those arguments perhaps more succinctly than I am doing now. The first one is, "Many supporters of BC-STV argue that the referendum threshold of 60% was too high, and that a simple majority of 50% plus one vote should have been sufficient to make the referendum binding.

"It was also pointed out that the actual vote of 57.7% (with a simple majority in 77 of 79 ridings) was commonly presented as a failing vote, when, according to the actual wording of the legislation, it simply represented a result that is non-binding upon the government." This is the same wording we have here.

"Under the Act, for a result (either Yes or No) to be binding, it must have the support of 60% of the vote and a simple majority (voting the same way) in at least 48 ridings. Thus, while the result did not bind the government to implement BC-STV, neither did it bind the government not to implement BC-STV. In this regard, it has been argued that the result was advisory, and that the government could have chosen, if it wished, to implement BC-STV. In fact, not to implement BC-STV could be interpreted as taking the advice of the 42% who voted No rather than the advice of the 58% who voted Yes. This is something the government may wish to consider should the result of the 2008 referendum produce a similarly strong but non-binding result."

This is the information we got from Mr. Gibson: "The circumstance of having a result which is non-binding in either direction is a direct result of establishing a threshold of 60% for either option. There are two ways to avoid this. One is to clearly indicate that only one option will be binding if it reaches the threshold and to indicate which option that is. The other is to conduct a binding referendum on the basis of a 50%-plus-one-vote margin. In the latter instance, any vote clearly binds the government."

What the minister talks about as the BC tradition is an aberration in Canada. It was the first time an artificially high threshold was ever set. Prince Edward Island followed suit, and it didn't pass either, although it would not have passed in any event because it didn't get 50%. But it is an aberration of the way governments have been democratically conducting referenda in this country for a century. I ask the members to think about the really key referenda that have taken place in my lifetime and before my lifetime. Newfoundland joined Confederation with 51% of the vote. They didn't get 60%. Had Joey Smallwood asked for 60%, Newfoundland still wouldn't be

part of Canada. I see that the member from Thornhill, who never had an original thought in his life, is waving his arms around, as he might wish to do. But Newfoundland would not have joined Confederation had the threshold been 60%. Do you not think that joining Confederation is far more important than how the voting structure takes place? I certainly think so. That was deemed to be sufficient at 50% plus one.

Quebec's referendum: Every single Quebec referendum has 50% plus one. Now, there have been some clarifications that the question must be unambiguous. I would state that the last two times they held a referendum the question was ambiguous. I'm looking forward, if they ever hold one again, that it be a clear question. But I would state that the people of Quebec have an unfettered right to vote, and if the majority of them want to vote a certain way, then the government should act upon it.

Conscription in World War I and World War II was a referendum. The government never acted upon it, but it was 50% plus one. The alcohol, which has already been spoken about, in 1921 was a referendum which was 50% plus one. You don't think that drinking alcohol was important to many of the citizens of this country, then and now? But it was 50% plus one. Fluoride in the water of Toronto was 50% plus one. You don't think what we ingest and what we have our children ingest is as important as this? I would beg to differ, and it was 50% plus one. Right down to the Charlottetown accord it was 50% plus one, although it did require that a majority of the provinces representing a majority of the people had that authority, and it failed there. But it didn't fail on the 50% plus one; it failed because not enough provinces came forward to accept it. The majority of people voted for Charlottetown and, had they met the other threshold, it would have passed. It did not require 60% plus one either.

The former Conservative government refused to abide by referenda that were not initiated by them, so when the citizens of Toronto, or the megacity, voted about 80% not to have their city amalgamated, the government refused to do so because, they said, it was not a referendum to which they had agreed; it was not initiated by them and they were going to ignore it. But the Liberals have one-upped this in this very term of office. This government has refused to act on a referendum that they themselves sanctioned, that they themselves agreed they would be bound by, and that is the citizens of the city of Kawartha Lakes, which the now Minister of Citizenship and Immigration lovingly called the "city of Kawartha mistakes," because in fact it was.

1710

The citizens there took the government at its word, got a ministerial defined question by the government in power at the time, which was the Conservatives, got the agreement of the now Premier that he and his party would be bound by the results of that referendum, went ahead, held the referendum, took 51% or 52% of the vote, only to be told the threshold wasn't high enough. I think that's where all of this is coming from: The

threshold is not high enough. We want to see a much higher threshold so that we can take action.

I would tell you that any member of this Legislature who gets elected with 50% plus one would say that he or she had a mandate. Many of us in this Legislature—many of us—do not have anywhere near that kind. If it's good enough to elect somebody at 30% or 35%, I fail to see how it's not good enough when 50% plus one of the citizens come forward, make a decision and that a government should be bound by it.

We have a situation here today that has set the situation and the standards so high, it may be virtually impossible for those good people, those 103 individuals who are working literally every weekend, either together or on their own, studying learned books on proportional representation and other things, to actually have what they're recommending happen at all. This is rendered by that third failure, which is identical to BC.

The third failure in BC was how the information was to be conveyed to the public. I read this. I read through section 19 of the regulations, how the information on what the citizens are going to do is going to be conveyed to the public. When we went to BC and asked them why it failed, it failed, they said, because it couldn't get 60%, which was artificially high. It failed because it could not be conveyed to the public what in fact the referendum was all about.

The British Columbia citizens' assembly delivered their report in December 2003. Immediately after that, the government, in its wisdom, set up an information office and gave them a paltry sum of \$710,000 with which to inform every single elector in British Columbia—\$710,000. With that \$710,000, they set up a website. We've heard that almost every day in here, setting up a website, as if it's actually going to accomplish something.

Mr. Leal: A busy week for websites.

Mr. Prue: You're right: a big week for websites. They set up a toll-free call system, and they had enough money that every single household—not every single elector but every single household would get one piece of literature to try to explain the arcane and very difficult proposition that the single transferable vote was best for them.

Now, the citizens' assembly in BC chose the single transferable vote. It is one of the most difficult systems on the face of this earth for any normal individual to understand. Even people who have lived in Ireland their whole life have difficulty understanding how this system works. It works because you get not one but five votes. They take off the top winner and then they recount the votes. They skim off the top numbers if you get too many votes and throw them in the garbage can and don't count them a second time. It is a strange and horrendous system, so I'm not surprised that the people in British Columbia were flummoxed by what they were voting for. In fact, most of them had no idea other than they knew that the system they had was broken and they were willing to try almost anything. But they got that

information in one single, solitary piece of mail delivered one per household throughout British Columbia.

The reality of the \$710,000 system that was set up by the government is that it too was doomed to fail. The RIO, the Referendum Information Office, got 500 e-mails—that's all—in the period between December 2003 and the time of the referendum. In a whole year they got 500 e-mails. That's about one a day asking, "Can you please elucidate? Can you please tell me?"

The second part was that they got only 4,200 calls toll-free in a whole year. I don't know how many people were on the phones waiting for the calls to ring, but I understand that most of them had cobwebs growing on the ends of their noses, because it simply was not enough money and simply was not done well enough so that ordinary people would want to come forward and try to find out that information.

The question of the budget is a very real one that needs to be examined. In British Columbia, that province spent \$5.5 million for the British Columbia citizens' assembly. I have no idea how much money has been put forward by this government or how much money is going to be spent before it's over. FairVote British Columbia suggested that we spend approximately \$1 per elector in order to inform them on how the system works. British Columbia chose to spend about 25 cents per elector. The results were catastrophic because nobody really understood, in the end, what was being voted for. The government there refused to do so.

There is no information contained within the body of this bill or with the minister's statements that any real important monies are going to be forthcoming in order to ensure that this works. There is nothing within the body of the bill that gives me any comfort as well about whether there are going to be yes and no sides, as they do in Quebec and as they have done elsewhere, yes and no sides struck to try to argue and to bring public debate out in terms of which side people may want to align themselves with.

There are monies available. There are strict criteria on how the monies are apportioned and how they're spent and that both sides are treated equally. There is nothing in here that I can find that says that is going to happen. I've looked at the regulations—I'm going to deal with those in a minute—but there is nothing there that gives me any cause that this government is going to commit the necessary monies. They are going to look at how the people collect the monies, but I would assume this is going to be done largely like an election campaign, that the yes side goes out and gets how much money they can collect and the no side goes out and gets how much money they can collect. But I want to tell you, this may not be a fair process. Unless the government is going to make sure that both sides have roughly equivalent amounts of money, then we're not going to have a fulsome debate where everything is aired so that the public can understand. There is nothing in here that shows that the yes and no sides are going to be recognized. There is a provision that they're going to

have to register with the electoral officer, but there's no real recognition of the yes and no sides, which would be required and was required in Quebec.

I want to turn my attention now towards the end, to the regulations. The regulations are found towards the end of the bill, section 19. Again, some of my comments are eerily going to be the same as they were earlier about the Lieutenant Governor in Council because, if you see here, the regulations are set up in such a way that there will be no debate in this House. Nobody from the opposition is going to have any say in how these regulations are implemented; they're done by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. They go across a whole broad swath. I guess we're going to be asked to assume and going to be asked to be told that everything in here is going to be fair.

Take a look at the regulations that are going to be decided by the minister herself or the minister in conjunction with her cabinet colleagues. She is going to be allowed to prohibit "any person or entity from organizing a campaign"—it goes on from there; I could read the whole thing—"to promote a particular result in the referendum or advertising for that purpose unless the person or entity is registered with the Chief Election Officer, subject to such exceptions as are specified in the regulations." So here we have a government that has not said—they're going through the process. They've made it artificially high, and then they're going to set regulations that are never going to be debated in this House; they're going to be debated by the cabinet. We're never going to see them; they're just going to be there. And it will forbid and prohibit any person or entity from organizing a campaign.

1720

The second one is, the Lieutenant Governor in Council is going to be "governing applications to the Chief Election Officer for registration, including specifying criteria to be met." I don't know what that means, but there it is.

The third one is "requiring the Chief Election Officer to make information relating to registered referendum campaign organizers available to the public." I don't have any difficulty with that, but I don't know how the cabinet is going to deal with that and I don't know what is going to be said.

The next one is potentially very controversial: "governing contributions to referendum campaign organizers, including,

"(i) prescribing what constitutes a contribution and, with respect to a contribution that is not in the form of money, prescribing how to determine its monetary value."

So this minister and this cabinet are going to set about doing something which we have always entrusted the Chief Election Officer to do. She's going to make the regulations that may make it virtually impossible for people who are either in favour or opposed to the recommendations of the citizens' committee to get off the drawing board. She's going to determine who's making the contribution and whether it's allowable. Does this

mean no contributions from developers? Does this mean no contributions from unions or rich people or poor people or people opposed or people in favour? It's up to the discretion of the minister, and it's never going to be debated in this House. Governing who may make contributions: Is that everybody? Is that certain people? I don't know.

"(iii) prescribing limits on contributions that may be made, accepted or solicited, or prescribing rules for calculating those limits." So there are going to be limits, I suppose. Limits are a good thing. We have them in election processes, but what are those limits? It's not specified here. It's up to the regulations made by one person, or one person in conjunction with her cabinet colleagues.

"(iv) requiring the return or other disposition of contributions that contravene the regulations." Well, I suppose, but we don't know what those regulations are to be contravened at this time.

"(e) governing loans and the provision of guarantees and collateral security to referendum campaign organizers." So if one side which is not particularly wealthy wants to take a loan out in order to start a campaign or to finance a campaign in the hope of collecting some monies to pay it off, this will govern the use of funds, the collateral security to referendum campaign organizers, which may, for some poorer people or people without good assets, make it very difficult.

"(f) governing the use of funds by referendum campaign organizers"—so she's actually going to tell them how the money is to be spent—"including prescribing spending limits;"

"(g) governing the return or other disposition of surplus funds...." I guess that has to be in there somewhere. If you collect too much money, you can't spend it all.

Skip down a couple:

"(k) governing advertising to promote a particular result in the referendum...." So she is going to make regulations which will govern the advertising; that is, saying how the advertising is going to take place. I'm a little reluctant to allow for this without some real specific legislation. I want to know that the minister cannot turn around and tell the yes side, "You can't put in this kind of stuff," or the no side, "You can't put this in either." I can understand that it has to meet a standard so that it's not inflammatory, it's not illegal—I can understand those things—but that's not what's here. It gives the minister and the cabinet full authority to govern "advertising to promote a particular result in the referendum, including,

"(i) prescribing information to be included...." You're going to say what can be put in and what can't.

"(ii) prescribing duties of broadcasters and publishers who broadcast or publish advertisements on behalf of others." You're going to tell the radio and television stations what they can play and what they can't.

"(iii) imposing a blackout period during which no advertising is permitted." If that's one day, like we have in an election, on the same day, I wouldn't have any objection, but that's not what's here.

Last but not least is “providing for any other matter that is necessary or desirable to protect the integrity of the referendum and referendum campaign.” Again, this is down to one person’s view. It will never be debated in this Legislature.

The all-party committee, as I said, came up with a consensus of what all parties thought would work, and I would just like to go through those, if I may, in terms of what was attempted and where the minister has not followed it, because I think this is very important and why the legislation has, to this point, been given a rougher ride than perhaps the minister had anticipated. She said she was taken aback a little by the vociferous response of some members in the opposition when we were opposed to what was contained. The reason some members are opposed to what is contained is because you have not followed what was considered absolutely fair by every single member from every single party in this Legislature. Most carefully, Madam Minister, I invite you to look at the recommendations.

“4. The referendum should be binding upon a vote of 50% plus one, and the support of 50% plus one in at least two thirds (i.e., 71) of the ridings, or any other formula that ensures the result has support from northern, rural, and urban areas of the province.”

The committee understood that you can’t have just 50% plus one and have all of the farming communities or all of the northern communities or all of the cities opposed while the majority of the rest—we understand that. We understand there’s a safeguard. That same safeguard was used in Charlottetown. That same safeguard has been used in other places to ensure that it is balanced and fair across the width and breadth of the province. But the importance here was the 50% plus one vote, and you have ignored that.

You have accepted the fifth recommendation, which was that “any referendum on electoral reform should be held in conjunction with a provincial general election.” I thank you for taking that one. It made sense. I think what BC is doing the second time around—holding it in conjunction with the municipal campaign—will ensure that the turnout is so much lower and that the results will be open to question again, because a majority of BC residents will not have voted if the last election is any sort of precursor of things to come.

The sixth recommendation was about the responsibility for the referendum question. I want to read this one again because this is huge:

“Responsibility for the referendum question(s)—including the wording and number of questions to be asked, and the number of referendums to be held—rest ultimately with the Legislature, acting on the advice of the citizens’ assembly, the select committee on electoral reform and, if required, Elections Ontario.”

You have ignored that. You have taken that responsibility totally upon yourself without any debate in the Legislature, without any legislation being put forward, and entirely by regulation, which is not subject to the scrutiny of any other person than yourself, and I cannot say how wrong I think that is.

“7. Elections Ontario (or another appropriate and neutral body) should be charged with the responsibility for ensuring that every voter receives adequate information about the arguments for and against each side of any question that is put to the people. Elections Ontario (or another appropriate and neutral body) should also be asked at the earliest opportunity to prepare a plan for an effective, participatory, proactive public education campaign, with an emphasis on enabling voters to participate in town hall meetings or other community forums.”

Madam Minister, and to the members opposite, you’re not doing that. It’s not contained within the bill. There is no provision other than that you are going to allow individuals, corporations or other entities to try to collect money and to make their own case. There is nothing in here saying that a neutral third party—as was attempted in BC, although failingly—would be involved and would properly educate the citizens on what is going to be a very complex issue.

“8. Members from either side of the House should not be constrained by their party leadership from taking part in any public debate and discussion of electoral reform, and be encouraged to play a role in fostering public dialogue in their own ridings.”

This did not happen in British Columbia. There’s nothing to date that says you’re either for or against this, so I’m only asking that you consider this most carefully.

1730

Number 9 was to involve the Association of Former Parliamentarians. I think I can leave that one out.

Last but not least, and it’s something which was brought up by the member from Halton and which is important, is that “Reform of the electoral system should contain provisions guaranteeing a review (if not also a referendum) on the suitability of the new system, to take place not before the third and not after the fourth election held under this system. One of the criteria for this review should be a measure of the acceptance of the new system by the public.”

There is nothing in this bill that qualifies for a review. In fact, at the end of the bill it’s very terse. It says that the bill ceases to be law almost immediately after the election. Wait until I find it here. “This act is repealed on the day the Legislature is dissolved for the first time after the 2007 general election.” So it’s not going to last very long.

One of the Conservative members—I believe it was Mr. Wilson—asked about how you’re going to bind a future government.

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: That’s the way it’s done.

Mr. Prue: That’s the way it’s done. Okay. But I just want to give the scenario. The citizens—

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: How else can we do it?

Mr. Prue: I’m going to tell you how I think you can do it.

Mr. Wilson: You could do it within your term of office.

Mr. Prue: Yes. The easiest way is to do it within your term of office.

Another way you can do it is to promise that, if elected, you will carry it out, but we've run into those circumstances before too.

Another one you can do is to put within the body of the legislation that the results are binding.

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: They are binding.

Mr. Prue: No, they are only binding if they are 60% plus one and accepted by the next Legislature. But they're not binding upon the next Legislature if they're not 60% plus one. They're not binding.

So let's take it—because most of the opposition I have ever heard comes both from your caucus and from the Conservatives, who are opposed to any form of proportional representation. Should one of you be elected, then I would assume that same opposition may still be there, so it would not bind, as in BC, if there's less than 60%, and if there's more and if it's the Conservatives, I don't know whether they would actually be bound. From my discussions here with Mr. Wilson, I don't think he would feel bound at all. Am I correct in that? I would assume so.

Mr. Wilson: It's not my idea. This is their party.

Mr. Prue: So there you have it. It would not be his idea and he wouldn't want to do it.

This is the kind of problem I have for all of those individuals, for all of those 103 people who are working their hearts out trying to change something and make it better. I feel for them, because I know it needs to be better. They need to know that it is possible that what they are saying is actually going to happen. I need to know that the regulations and the laws are going to be made by this Legislature and not by you alone. The people need to know that if they vote overwhelmingly in favour of a proposition, it is going to happen. We need to know that it is a fair system. We need to know that the question is not loaded. All of these things are left out of this bill.

I am asking, in the end—and I know the government has the legislative muscle and 70 people in this Legislature when they want to have it—to vote to pass this bill at second reading. I am asking that it go to committee, and it's going to have to go fast. I don't know whether this is your plan, because no one has yet said that this bill is going to go to committee. In order for it to succeed, this is going to have to be in operation pretty fast. The citizens' assembly is going to report in the spring and we are going to have to know whether or not this bill is the vehicle by which their recommendation is carried. I am asking—and perhaps you can respond or you want to use the two minutes which you are entitled to after I sit down to say—whether or not this bill is going to go to committee, whether we're going to hear from people, whether or not the government is willing to make those changes, whether the government is willing to refer what is necessary back to the Legislature and out of the hands of a single, sole individual. We need to know whether or not the government is going to listen to the assembly groups, those like Fair Vote Ontario and Fair Vote

Canada, which quite frankly are appalled at the 60%. They're very appalled.

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: I've met with them.

Mr. Prue: You've met with them, and do they like it?

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: But we talked about it.

Mr. Prue: They don't like it, no, but you've talked. Okay. I need to know that what they have to say, because they have been struggling with this proposition for years, is going to be listened to.

In the end, it all will come down to good faith. If the members of this Legislature from all sides can come to a conclusion like the select committee did and can come to an agreement on how it's going to work, and abide by it and support it, then it will be supported. If there are going to be internal arguments about the fairness of the number or whether or not all power rests with the minister or whether or not the Legislature or the citizens have been listened to, then I am afraid that the very noble exercise of those individuals and the very noble platform of the government in the last election around this issue are for naught.

I don't want to rag on—I think I've said everything that needs to be said—but I am asking the minister to reconsider those aspects of the bill which we find not to be acceptable. I am asking that there be public hearings. I am asking that it be done fairly rapidly so that if and when the citizens' committee deliberates and comes to a conclusion, they will know whether or not there is a reasonable and realistic chance of how it's going to play out, and that the government makes sure that there are sufficient monies within the next budget, which I guess will be coming out in April or May, specifically designed so that the system does not have the same problems that were encountered in British Columbia. Certainly in New Zealand they spent well in excess of a dollar per person over two referendums in order to get the information out and public acceptance. If that is the way, if it's going to go by way of referendum, we need to make sure that the money is there, and in the end we need to make sure that it does not fail because it is misunderstood, because there are not sufficient people who have had an opportunity to speak or there is not sufficient opportunity to learn about it through the media or through the medium of television. Hopefully, even TVOntario might have a great role to play in this as well.

Having said all of that, at this stage I cannot say that I support the bill because of what is in it. But should it go to committee and should some of these major changes take effect, I would be more than happy on third reading to laud the minister for making the necessary changes so that it can be accepted by all parties and by everyone in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: I thank the honourable member from Beaches—East York for his debate, for his advice, for his criticism. Again we have different viewpoints, actually three or four different viewpoints within the Legislature. That's democracy and I respect that. You had on the one hand the member from Halton saying that we are the ones who should be making this

decision totally and we shouldn't leave it in the hands of an unelected group. Another honourable member says we have too much control and we don't give enough control perhaps to the citizens' assembly. I understand both viewpoints. I've listened to many, many viewpoints, including those two and many, many more, and I'm sure I'll listen to more in the months to come.

With respect to the legislation, it is binding. The next government, whether it's us or another party that forms the government, does have to introduce legislation for this to occur. Now, you're saying, "Well, legislation can die on the order paper." After a year's process, where citizens who represent their communities have gone through this process and given up so much of their personal time to do it, if any government has the gall to ignore that, if and when the referendum is binding, I think they will do so at their peril. This is the way this place works, through legislation, and there isn't enough time to do it in our own mandate. Having said that, it was the select committee's recommendation to have the referendum at the next election as well.

I do agree with the honourable member: British Columbia had its challenges in public education. I assure him we will have an excellent public education campaign. I also assure him that there will be committee hearings on the bill where his viewpoints and other viewpoints like Fair Vote and other stakeholders will be listened to.

Again I thank him for his debate, his advice, his criticism, and I look forward to hearing from others.

1740

Mr. Wilson: It's been interesting, but in the bill itself, the government says this is binding. Nothing could be further from the truth. It's not binding on anyone. The only thing that's required in the bill is that the government introduce legislation on or before—it says, "If the result of the referendum is binding, the government that is formed as a result of the 2007 general election shall, on or before December 31, 2008, introduce legislation to adopt the recommended electoral system." All that says is that you have to introduce a bill. Well, bills die on the order paper all the time. Governments prorogue, they come and go and they don't necessarily—often they'll introduce a bill just to fulfill, as in this case, a campaign promise and they probably have no intention of ever following through with it.

If you wanted to do it, you would have started this three years ago. You made the promise four years ago that you were going to do this thing. You would have done it when you first came to office. Citizens' assembly, student assembly, everything would be over with by now. And you would do it while you have a majority government if you really believed in this stuff. That's how you bind yourselves. There's nothing binding about this. If I hear that word one more time in here I think I'm going to throw something, like Ralph Klein, across the House, except I won't hit any pages. You've got to stick with the facts here, folks.

The minister quite correctly said, "How else would you do it?" You would do it during your majority term in

government. You've got four years. You're the ones who brought in the Americanization of our electoral system and now you want to cancel the first-past-the-post system so that perhaps, under proportional representation, a bunch of party hacks who aren't elected—I met with the Speaker of New Zealand. He loves the bloody system. The Labour Party will be there forever because they keep getting enough proportional representation of the vote so that a few of them get elected, but then everybody else, based on the proportion of the vote they got in that election, is picked off the party hack list. So you end up sitting beside someone who represents no one, has never been elected, has no accountability, doesn't have to go home at night and on weekends and face any constituents at all. They're simply not elected and not accountable.

Ms. Martel: I want to congratulate the member from Beaches–East York, my colleague, on his presentation on this bill this afternoon. I particularly appreciated the work he did to describe the work of the select committee and its recommendations and how the government, in its bill, has not achieved the unanimous recommendations that were made by the select committee.

I guess this is the concern that I want to raise here. We had an all-party committee, a select committee, that looked at this. I take the member at his word that everybody worked very hard on that committee, that they came to it without a biased view, came to it with a balanced view about potential changes and what could be done, and after much work by that committee, published a report that had very specific recommendations about how everybody felt one should proceed.

What bothers me the most about this bill is the government's rejection or dismissal out of hand of some of the really key recommendations that the committee agreed on. The idea of 60% in order for the referendum to be binding, after the committee had a much different recommendation and after the experience in British Columbia, which showed clearly how this wasn't going to work—the government is just setting this thing up to fail. Maybe it wants it to fail, I don't know, but it's very clear that 60% didn't work already somewhere in the country and that 60% is very arbitrary in terms of other very important votes that we have had in this country, indeed to put this country together, that have rested on 50% plus one. Why is the government moving to 60%? Why is the government dismissing or ignoring or not taking into account some of the other very important recommendations that the committee made, for example around who sets the question?

These are the concerns that I have. The government decided just to kind of pick and choose what they like, instead of going with recommendations that were clearly come to by a group of people who were very committed in doing the work that they did.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member from Mississauga West.

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): Gosh, I think I'm going to take the dare by my colleague from Simcoe–Grey. It is binding.

Interjection.

Mr. Delaney: Nothing? Nothing. Okay.

In fact, although I may agree with the member from Simcoe–Grey on his feelings on proportional representation, because I don't like it either, that's not what this bill is about. This bill is not about the outcome; this bill is about the process. In fact, what this Electoral System Referendum Act, 2006, is about is the means by which Ontario will elect its representatives, the process by which we're going to arrive at that. Perhaps Ontarians—perhaps—will be presented with a clear alternative to our present system. That's what this bill is about, and, if so, we're going to vote yes or no.

Now, if the citizens' panel concludes that about 1,000 years of evolution of parliamentary democracy has procedures that make it a system worth keeping, then nothing further will be done. We stay with the present system. If that same citizens' panel concludes that we have a clear alternative, then it has to be chosen by a clear majority.

That brings us to a question that some speakers have raised regarding voter turnout. Is voter turnout good or bad? Will voter turnout affect it? Probably, and if we can use the Quebec referendums as any example, we're probably looking at a very high voter turnout. If there's one thing we do know about Ontario voters, it's that they are informed, they're engaged and they're aware. They may pretend that they are not interested, but that doesn't mean they're not aware.

So if we have a clear alternative to our present system—and that's what this bill is about. It's establishing: Will a citizens' panel come up with a clear alternative or not? If it doesn't, nothing further will be done. If it does, it goes to the citizens of Ontario to make what I am sure is going to be an informed judgment after a very lively and vigorous debate.

The Acting Speaker: It's time for a response.

Mr. Prue: First of all, I would like to thank the minister for her comment that there will be a committee process in which ordinary citizens can come forward to comment on various aspects of the bill.

The member from Mississauga West and the member from Simcoe–Grey are both singing from the same song sheet, although they may sound one alto and one contralto, I think. But they're both opposed to any change to the current system, so of course they like 60% because it will virtually ensure that the current system with all of its warts and flaws will stay that way virtually forever.

I do, though, thank the member from Simcoe–Grey for his comments about binding a future government. This is a difficult proposition. It is difficult, and I'm not sure exactly how a future government can be bound any more than what is contained within this act. But certainly I think people need to rest assured that even should this survive the hurdle of the 60% and there be changes, there is no future government that need do anything, save and except put the legislation in and never call it for second reading. That's the reality of all of this. So it's true.

I thank the member from Nickel Belt for her comments. She's right: The committee did a huge amount of

work. My colleagues on that committee—Liberals, Conservatives, myself, the clerk, Anne Stokes, and the research officer, Larry Johnson—did a huge amount of work trying to determine a system that would be accepted by all sides. The disappointment, I guess, in my speech here today is that it is simply not there. Some of the key elements have been left out or changed, to the point that it is difficult to see how in its current form it can be accepted, and it needs to be accepted by everyone.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Delaney: I guess I'm going to have the last word of the week on this bill.

I find myself agreeing with a comment made earlier by my colleague from Simcoe–Grey when he voiced the opinion that, in and of itself, the level of voter turnout isn't a problem, and that has some bearing on this because there's a certain threshold for this bill that's needed to succeed. Should a clear alternative be presented by the citizens' assembly, then it will go to a referendum. The referendum would be a separate ballot at the time of the next election. Voters would be given both an election ballot and a referendum ballot. They would have to mark each and put them in the ballot box at the same time. So at one point earlier in the debate, the member for Simcoe–Grey said that the level of voter turnout isn't a problem. In fact, he actually has a point. Is low voter turnout in and of itself a problem in our society?

There are two sides to that coin. One side says that people usually get the government that they deserve. So if you elect someone and then shortly after, people say, "How did this idiot get elected anyway?" then probably not enough people paid attention when they either did or didn't mark an X on their ballot.

1750

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I wonder if anybody's asking that about me.

Mr. Delaney: Some members here wonder whether they're asking that of any of us. Perhaps they may.

Going back to voter turnouts, voter turnouts are an indication not necessarily of whether a voter is casting an informed ballot, but mostly of voter engagement of a thorough debate. The odds of a bad representative being elected in a high voter turnout are probably lower than with a low voter turnout, but it's not impossible. If you're going to elect a bad representative, the best way to do it is with a low voter turnout.

A low voter turnout can still elect a great representative. For example, if an electoral district has a great representative widely perceived as being effective, then a low voter turnout may basically mean that people are satisfied and there's no particular perception of a crisis. For example, in Mississauga people have felt that way for years even though voter turnout is very low. Our mayor is re-elected, she got 91% earlier this week, and the incumbents on city council were returned, again with very large pluralities.

Mr. Prue: How about Carolyn Parrish?

Mr. Delaney: My colleague from Beaches–East York asks about the former federal member for Mississauga—

Erindale. I might remind him that she got very nearly 50% of the vote—nearly 50% of the vote in a crowded field.

There's a saying in software development that encapsulates some of the conundrums that as members we may be grappling with on this particular legislation. One of them goes a bit like this: Decisions are made by people who show up. What that means in software development is that your project is going to go ahead come hell or high water, and the people who are there for the meetings, the people who are engaged at the time that you decide on the features, are the people who determine the end result. Decisions are made by people who show up. And that's what happens to us right now in our elections. Is first past the post a bad system? It may or may not be. Personally, I think it's a good system. Some members here don't agree with me. But the decisions that send people to this House are made by people who show up.

One of the things that one sees in this House, on both sides of the hall, is fine elected representatives with a strong vision of a great Ontario and the passion to bring it forward. They were all sent here by somewhere between 20,000 and 30,000 people, sometimes more, in their riding. You've got to respect the decision of the people in their riding. They were sent here by people who showed up.

The flip side of that coin goes a bit like this: Bad governments are elected by people who don't vote. That's an interesting concept. That basically says that in a low voter turnout, you're much more likely to have a result that you may not be happy with. Bad governments are elected by people who don't vote.

We can all come up with a number of examples of that. I remember in the town that I grew up in there was a mayor that we widely perceived as being incompetent and incapable. He was basically re-elected a few times because people couldn't be bothered getting out of their houses to vote. As it came to pass—I remember my father being involved in this—they used to have a lot of the citizens' assemblies and meet in our living room. I'd be upstairs doing my homework and I got to see firsthand how simple politics were. It was a bunch of people who got together in the living room and decided that something had to be done. They went out to do the things that they agreed they would do, they came back, they decided whether or not they'd done it and at the next election, we chucked him out and replaced him with a guy who was widely perceived as being capable, honest, forward-

looking and progressive. Three years later, at the time of the next election, people said, "Oh, he's done a great job. He'll get back in; don't worry," but he lost by five votes. I remember we went out walking the previous night and we were asking people, "Have you gone out to vote yet?"—"Oh, don't worry."

"Have you gone out to vote yet?"—"Well, you know, I've got stuff to do."

"Have you gone out to vote yet?"—"Jeez, I've got to take my daughter here. I've got to go there."

And they were the same people who came back and said, "Why didn't we know it was so important?"

This particular bill, the referendum legislation on electoral reform, could change the way in which we choose our elected representatives. It's going to be an important decision. But the point of this debate is, we're not here to pre-judge whether it will recommend this or whether it will recommend that. My colleague from Beaches-East York speaks eloquently and passionately and from a solid base of educating himself about a process called proportional representation. I've looked at the same data and come to an entirely different conclusion. And should the citizens' assembly recommend that or anything like it, then it would be time for the two of us to engage in debate and see, from the basis of knowledge that we have, whether we can persuade people in our ridings to either support it or oppose it.

But that's not where we are now. Where we are right now is to deal with a process that allows some people who don't sit here to study the different systems of government and to decide among themselves, "Should we recommend a change?" If they don't recommend a change, it's all over; if they do recommend a change, then it goes to a referendum. That referendum is going to be binding. It does require the government, following the election of 2007, to introduce legislation to enact the results of that referendum.

Most of the rest of this relates to the mechanisms by which it could work, and let me quote a few of them. The same rules would apply to declining a referendum ballot or receiving a new referendum ballot as we already have in an election. The counting of the referendum ballots would occur after the counting of the election ballots is completed. The referendum ballots—

The Acting Speaker: Regrettably, it's 6 p.m. of the clock. This House stands adjourned until Monday, November 20, 2006, at 1:30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 1757.

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Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. Brown

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

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Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)		

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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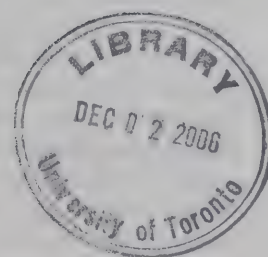
N° 122A

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**Second Session, 38th Parliament**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**Deuxième session, 38^e législature**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)****Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 20 November 2006

Lundi 20 novembre 2006

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. BrownPrésident
L'honorable Michael A. BrownClerk
Claude L. DesRosiersGreffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 20 November 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 20 novembre 2006

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CHILD DAY

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean–Carleton): Since 1954, the UN and UNESCO have recognized November 20 as universal child day, which is “to be observed as a day of worldwide fraternity and understanding between children.” In Canada, it was initiated in 1993 by Canada’s first female Prime Minister, Kim Campbell, through the Child Day Act to ensure that we as legislators are aware of our duty to protect the basic human rights of children in our country and that we celebrate how children enrich our lives.

As I drafted my remarks today, I was assisted by my 20-month-old daughter, Victoria, who insisted she be able to bang on my computer while I wrote. Talk about enriching my life. Looking at her big blue eyes, I saw with absolute clarity why we as legislators have a very special obligation to care for our province’s children and, in particular, children in the most vulnerable of circumstances.

I point this out because it is important that when we as legislators make promises to children—whether it is to eradicate child poverty in 10 years or to fund autism treatment for children over the age of six or to appoint an independent children’s advocate—those promises must be kept. Impressionable children rely on us. We are their protectors. I urge all members of this assembly to think of how we can help better serve our province’s children.

If I may conclude by reading from the preamble of the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child: “Mankind owes to the child the best it has to give.”

POLISH VETERANS

Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): I rise today to congratulate the members of Kitchener’s Royal Canadian Legion Polish Veterans’ Branch 412, which recently celebrated its 60th anniversary.

As members of this House are aware, veterans of the Polish armed forces, who had fought valiantly during the Second World War, came to Canada after 1945, and many chose to settle in my community of Kitchener–Waterloo. Members of the existing Royal Canadian

Legion at that time, Branch 50, welcomed these brave Polish veterans and assisted them in establishing their lives in the new community. Branch 50 also helped the Polish veterans open their own branch in downtown Kitchener.

Recently, I had the honour of attending a ceremony to mark the 60th anniversary of Branch 412. The contribution of these veterans was recognized through a photo retrospective as well as a celebration of Polish culture—a culture which continues to flourish in my community.

I want to offer congratulations to the Royal Canadian Legion Polish Veterans’ Branch 412 president, Wladyslaw Magier, and the executive officers. I’d also like to acknowledge Canadian Polish Congress president Maria Pruchnicka-Karczmarczyk, ladies’ auxiliary president Halina Jach, gala chair Krystyna Piotrowska-Freiburger and many others for their efforts in celebrating the past 60 years.

I must conclude with a special tribute to our local Polish veterans in Kitchener and across Waterloo region who sacrificed so much during World War II and continue to offer so much to our community today.

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): Two weeks ago, Eugene Kelly, a popular Hamilton musician and father of two, was planning to leave with his wife on a romantic getaway to Puerto Rico. Instead, he is on life support and hasn’t regained consciousness since he was swarmed by up to five teenagers outside a pizza store, brutally beaten and left in a pool of blood.

Media reports in the Hamilton Spectator indicate these same teens have been terrorizing neighbourhoods since Halloween. Youths too afraid to give their names have told the media, “Everyone knows these guys and knows not to say anything about them,” because of fear. Two young offenders charged in the vicious assault were granted bail; a third will get his hearing this Wednesday.

If the McGuinty government has any compassion for victims and any desire to send a message that violence, intimidation and threats to public safety are not acceptable, you send a message to all young offenders by setting a strict policy directive. All bail for vicious crimes should not only be opposed but should be appealed if granted.

The McGuinty Liberals closed the PC government’s successful youth strict discipline camp, and under this government we’ve seen a 68% decrease in young offenders being held in sentenced custody, at a time

when young offenders are increasingly involved in violent crime. While people worry about the safety of their neighbourhoods, this government is sending a message that they can't count on Mr. McGuinty and company to listen.

ARTS FUNDING

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): The March 2006 budget of the McGuinty government invested \$2.5 million in the arts facility for Orléans. On May 23, I had the pleasure of delivering these funds to Christine Tremblay, the executive director of Arts Ottawa East, and to the Mouvement d'implication francophone d'Orléans, at an event held in my riding. Friends and colleagues gathered to show their support for the arts and for a project that will give our community a venue in which we can celebrate our talents.

Orléans has been anticipating such a facility for more than 20 years. In October, Ottawa city council gave their final approval for an Orléans arts centre, paving the way for the construction of a \$36.8-million facility to begin next spring. The new facility will include a 500-seat performing arts theatre, space for the visual arts, a large municipal art gallery, a pottery school, rehearsal space, a second 100-seat theatre and administration space for Arts Ottawa East and MIFO. It will be a place to learn, to create and to share our achievements with the community.

Arts education contributes to success for students across the curriculum. It leads to measurable gains in student motivation, better attendance and reduced dropout rates. It enhances student engagement, fosters tolerance and respect for diversity, and builds self-confidence. Arts education also contributes to building a creative economy and creative communities.

I am proud that our government considers arts education to be a top priority. That is why the need for this facility was recognized in this year's budget, and now we are seeing this dream of the residents of Orléans become a reality.

FIREFIGHTERS

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): Firefighters across Ontario are receiving mixed messages from the McGuinty Liberal government. All the Liberals voted for my Bill 111 last month, and they are telling firefighters they are sympathetic to their call for presumptive legislation, which would guarantee firefighters and families are compensated if they develop an occupational disease like cancer. But firefighters don't want the McGuinty Liberals' sympathy; they want action on Bill 111. They want Ontario to have presumptive legislation like other provinces already have for their firefighters.

The McGuinty government could learn a thing or two from a young woman named Caleigh LeGrand, a student at the University of Western Ontario in London. Caleigh is working on a project in support of firefighters, Bill 111

and the fight against cancer. It's called Save Your Own Hero.

On November 27, from 2 p.m. till 3 p.m. on Western's main campus, Caleigh will be promoting awareness of these vital issues with the full support of the London fire department and the university's chief of fire prevention and emergency management. As well as mounting displays and launching an interactive website, Caleigh will be selling gift cards for \$10 donations to the Canadian Cancer Society in the name of a friend or loved one.

I urge members of the public in London and across Ontario and all MPPs to visit Caleigh's website as of November 24 and make a contribution. The website address is www.saveyourownhero.blogspot.com. For firefighters who risk their lives to keep us safe, I hope young Caleigh's passion and conviction will inspire the McGuinty Liberal government to move ahead with presumptive legislation as detailed in my Bill 111.

1340

FORMER PREMIERS' GRAVESITES

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): A few weeks ago, when I was in Kingston for a meeting of the Eastern Ontario Municipal Association, I took the time to visit the gravesite of Canada's first Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald. It was an impressive site, well marked and with the Canadian flag flying above it. There were visitors, both local and international, taking the opportunity to learn a bit about this historic leader.

Over the summer, I visited the gravesites of Ontario's former Premiers and, sadly, the same level of markings and such were not present. As presented on Global Television recently, there was nothing at the burial site of former Premier Thomas Laird Kennedy to indicate that he had served in the position of Premier. As well, during my visit to Mitchell Hepburn's gravesite at St. Thomas, I noted the lack of recognition of his contributions to Ontario.

Just as Canadians benefit from the proper markings of the gravesites of former Prime Ministers, both in terms of history and visitation, so can Ontarians benefit from the proper markings of the final resting places of Ontario's Premiers.

I would like to thank all my colleagues from both sides of this House who joined me on these tours this summer, and I would particularly like to thank my legislative assistant, Kerry Towndrow, for helping me to reach each of these sites throughout Ontario. I would encourage all members and indeed all Ontarians to go out and visit these gravesites and share in the rich history and leadership of these men who represented Ontario.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): Today Ontario Progressive Conservative leader John Tory unveiled a prac-

tical plan to address the many challenges faced by our foreign-trained professional and skilled immigrants living in Ontario. The plan, A Time for Action, will make a measurable difference in the lives of skilled immigrants and of all Ontarians. The John Tory plan will, among other things, speed up the process of integrating skilled immigrants with new measures to begin the accreditation process in their countries of origin prior to arrival in Canada; better focus and increase provincial government support to help integrate them into our economy and our society; and remove the obstacles faced by newcomers when they enter the workforce, including establishing and expanding the various doctor assistant programs.

If we want newcomers to Ontario to have their expectations met and to fulfill their true potential, and if we want to meet our responsibilities to them, we must recognize that this must be a priority of the Ontario government. This is about skilled immigrants themselves, their families and the future of Ontario and its economy. We welcome this report tabled by John Tory and look forward to broad support by all Ontarians and all members of the Legislature for this plan.

LEADING WOMEN, BUILDING COMMUNITIES AWARD

Ms. Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): This year Sandra Papatello, the minister responsible for women's issues, created the Leading Women, Building Communities Award to recognize women who have made exceptional contributions in their communities.

Along with MPPs Chris Bentley, Khalil Ramal and Steve Peters, I was pleased to honour 38 dynamic women from London and Elgin and Middlesex counties with this award. These are women who have made an important and positive difference in the lives of women and girls in our communities.

This inaugural year's award winners include women like Helene Berman, Helen Connell and Anne Cummings, who promote women's and girls' health and well-being through education, community service and research; women like Joan Smith, Barbara Rankin and Erin-Rankin-Nash, who have actively supported women's political involvement; women like Nancy Miller and Betsy Reilly, who provide young girls with guidance, mentoring and opportunities for empowerment; women like Yasmin Hussain, Lorin McDonald, Afsaneh Azari and Huda Hussein, who work hard to promote social inclusion within our community; women like Susan McPhail, Darlene Ritchie, Leone Westby and Lorna Bruce, who help the most vulnerable women in our community find dignity and hope; and women like Mary Catherine Ann and Diehl Elkin, who work hard to make communities free from violence for women and children.

I would like to congratulate all of the award winners for working to make our community stronger. They inspire others to become leaders.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): I rise today to speak about what the McGuinty government is doing to aid new Ontarians to help them grow and thrive in the new economy. Giving new Ontarians the tools and opportunities to succeed is why the McGuinty government has committed to investing an additional \$14 million into 24 new bridge training programs over the next three years to help over 3,000 new Ontarians get into their field of work sooner. This, teamed with the investments of over \$34 million since 2003 to help more than 6,000 newcomers to Ontario, shows that the McGuinty government is on the side of new Ontarians and is getting results.

The McGuinty government understands the obstacles that new Ontarians face, which is why these programs include an emphasis on the improvement of language skills, which help to prepare new Ontarians for their written and oral exams and, in turn, allow them to gain employment in their related fields more swiftly.

A quick glance at the previous government's record toward new Ontarians shows that they did nothing to remove barriers facing internationally trained professionals. They even cut adult education spaces by 80%. They also made apprenticeships more costly, putting up further barriers to the success of new Ontarians.

It has been our commitment to break down those barriers and show new Ontarians the respect that they deserve. There is always more to do—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

VISITORS

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Transportation): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: It's my honour today to introduce the Honourable Kevin Falcon, the Minister of Transportation for British Columbia, and his executive assistant, Rob MacKay-Dunn. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding evening sittings this week, that the question on this motion be put forthwith and without amendment or debate, and that if a recorded vote is requested by five members, the division bells shall be limited to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I move that the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Monday, November 20, 2006, Tuesday, November 21, 2006, and Wednesday,

November 22, 2006, for the purpose of considering government business, and that at 9:30 p.m. on each of these days, the Speaker shall adjourn the House without motion until the next sessional day.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells ran from 1349 to 1354.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Amott, Ted	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Peters, Steve
Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Phillips, Gerry
Balkissoon, Bas	Gerretsen, John	Pupatello, Sandra
Bentley, Christopher	Hardeman, Ernie	Racco, Mario G.
Bountrogianni, Marie	Hoy, Pat	Ramal, Khalil
Bradley, James J.	Jeffrey, Linda	Runciman, Robert W.
Brownell, Jim	Klees, Frank	Sandals, Liz
Cansfield, Donna H.	Levac, Dave	Scott, Laurie
Caplan, David	Marsales, Judy	Smith, Monique
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Matthews, Deborah	Smitherman, George
Chudleigh, Ted	Milloy, John	Tory, John
Colle, Mike	Mitchell, Carol	Van Bommel, Maria
Crozier, Bruce	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Watson, Jim
Delaney, Bob	O'Toole, John	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dunlop, Garfield	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Yakabuski, John
Elliott, Christine	Patten, Richard	Zimmer, David

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
DiNovo, Cheri	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
Horwath, Andrea	Murdoch, Bill	

The Deputy Clerk (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 48; the nays are 8.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I move that notwithstanding standing order 96(g), notice for ballot item 64 be waived.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

VISITORS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm wondering if the House would

join me in giving a warm round of applause to the Craighurst Women's Institute, who are joining us in the east gallery today.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Today we've got in our presence Maureen Tourangeau from the great city of Ottawa. She's here today with the Canadian Cancer Society, Ottawa unit, of which I used to be a board member. Please welcome the Canadian Cancer Society from Ottawa.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

SKILLS TRAINING FOR ABUSED WOMEN

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues): Almost two years ago, on December 13, 2004, our government introduced our four-year, \$68-million domestic violence action plan. In that plan, we committed to a new pilot training program to help abused women succeed in the workforce and gain economic independence.

Today I'm pleased to report that we've delivered on this commitment. It's another example of how our government is taking action to prevent domestic violence and better support women who have been abused.

I've heard from so many women who have made the difficult decision to leave an abusive relationship that one of their biggest concerns, after their personal safety and the safety of their children, is being able to provide for themselves and for their families.

1400

This morning, I visited George Brown College in Toronto to announce that our government is investing \$4 million over two years in 10 domestic violence employment training pilot projects in Ontario. This is very good news for women. This pilot program will assist hundreds of women who have experienced, or are at risk of experiencing, domestic violence to rebuild their lives and achieve economic independence. It will help women gain confidence, new skills and good jobs. These are positive changes that make a real difference. We're opening doors by helping women get the skills they need to work in the banking industry, retail, food service, hospitality and tourism.

The program offered at George Brown College will train women to be residential air-conditioning systems mechanics. It will offer a well-paying and much-in-demand skilled trade.

The projects are designed to help a wide range of women who have experienced abuse. Some will focus on reaching francophone, aboriginal, ethnocultural communities, rural, northern women and women with disabilities. They will benefit from a learning environment sensitive

to their needs as they recover from abuse. They will also have access to support services, such as counselling, to assist in their recovery.

One of the unique aspects of this pilot program is the three-way partnership between a violence-against-women group, training organization and the employer. So this morning, with George Brown College, we had Direct Energy, and the senior vice-president was there. They will actually be offering the placements for these people in this program. As well, we had Nellie's Shelter, a Toronto abusé centre. All of them were participating to provide the women who enter the program the supports required—in some cases, transportation, child care, counselling services—everything these women need to get their foot moving towards economic independence.

This partnership model reflects our government's vision that preventing domestic violence is a shared responsibility. This new pilot program is one of many initiatives to promote women's economic independence and prevent domestic violence. We are investing \$4.2 million to provide information technology and pre-apprenticeship training in the skilled trades for low-income women who are unemployed or underemployed.

We're also funding improvements to shelters and housing, enhancing counselling services and training professionals to recognize the signs of abuse earlier and give women the support they need.

Just last week, the government announced a very innovative public education campaign aimed at children and youth and the adults who influence them. The goal, again, is to change attitudes and break the cycle of violence.

These efforts reflect the government's commitment to ensure that women and their children can live free from violence and that they can rebuild their life with new-found skills and greater confidence.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Response?

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby–Ajax): On behalf of John Tory and the PC Party, I'm happy to respond to the minister's statement today regarding her announcement of a skills training program to enable vulnerable women by equipping them with the ability to develop and sustain economic independence.

As is understood by every member in this House, the safety and well-being of all women in the province of Ontario is at its core a non-partisan issue. We must work together to ensure that vulnerable women and their children are protected. One way to ensure that is to provide them with the tools they need to create and maintain a life independent from the men who seek to control them.

I am, therefore, happy to hear that this government has taken a step in that direction with this initiative, and I would encourage the minister to ensure that her government follows through on all the commitments they have made to help victims of domestic violence.

I should mention that under our previous government we introduced the women in skilled trades program, an initiative that is still in place today. This announcement

sounds like it is building on the fundamental ideas motivating our creation of that program—specifically, the idea that furthering women in the job force and affording them exciting opportunities in fields that have been historically less accessible should be a priority in government.

We also introduced the Domestic Violence Protection Act and increased spending in this area by 70%. We are proud of the women in the skilled trades program, and we are proud of our record on this domestic violence prevention file.

I will say in closing that we as public servants have a role to serve for all vulnerable people in the province of Ontario, and I would urge this government to remember many vulnerable communities that have been forgotten under their watch. Consider the 1.2 million Ontarians without a family doctor and autistic children and their families. I would encourage this government to move forward to honour the many, many promises that have simply gone unfulfilled since they took office.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): This announcement certainly constitutes another small piece in the file on violence against women. The problem, we know, of violence against women deserves our full attention, not piecemeal measures and pre-election announcements like this minister is bringing to us today. In fact, barely 50% of the commitment that this government made to stopping violence against women has even been invested in the province of Ontario. Of course training opportunities are crucial for women who have fled a cycle of violence in the home and who need gainful employment and financial security first and foremost after the safety of their family is taken care of, but the odd pilot project is just not going to cut it. We need to see full funding for these kinds of initiatives that women across the province can take advantage of, not piecemeal pilot projects here and there, not just websites where people can tune into the computer to find information. We need real, sustainable programs from one part of this province to the other, and that's what the minister needs to start working on.

Certainly the initiative announced today is not something that we're going to be critical of, except for saying that it's too little and too late. A program like this is not, obviously, going to stop the root causes of violence against women, but of course, for those few women who can access the announcement today, it will help a little bit.

There are many crucial recommendations from stakeholders, from experts and from coroners' juries that are missing from the Liberal strategy on violence against women. Women's groups want to see the government take real action on core issues, the bread-and-butter, bricks-and-mortar issues in violence against women. Housing and income supports must exist for women and children who flee for their safety. We need more second-stage housing and transitional housing. In my community alone, the minister will know that we lost an entire second-stage housing program. There's over half a mil-

lion people in the city of Hamilton, and now, as a result of family services going down the tubes, we've lost dozens—dozens—of second-stage housing units in the city of Hamilton, and they haven't been replaced by the minister.

I urge the members of this House and the minister to take a look at another program that's taking place right now in this country in the province of Alberta. It's called the Alberta flee fund, and it is a comprehensive program. It leaves nothing to chance when ensuring that women have the support and resources they need to turn their lives around. Without money and a place to live, women remain in violent relationships just so that their children will be housed and fed. That's not acceptable. Albertans in abusive situations can get 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week help through Alberta Works. All they need to do is call a toll-free number, and the fund will cover them as long as they're eligible. They can get to safety immediately, start their new life and set up a new household.

By comparison, Ontario is way behind on this file. Alberta shows how seriously it deals with the problem through a long list of items it will pay for to ensure that anyone can escape violence and rebuild one's life. Emergency transportation to a safe place such as a women's shelter is provided. If the shelters are full or if there isn't one available, then hotel accommodation is immediately arranged for the woman. A \$56 allowance is there to cover incidental expenses for the woman and her children as they flee. Emergency items such as prescription drugs, dental, optical services and child care are covered. Relocation costs are covered, even to other places in Canada if necessary if the woman is determined to have to be leaving the province of Alberta for her own safety and the safety of her children. There's a \$1,000 allowance used to help set up a new home. The damage deposit is provided to help to secure a rental apartment if necessary. Financial help provides for food, clothing, shelter and other basic needs that are going to help the woman and basically free her from the expectation to work initially so she can take care of the well-being of herself and her children before moving into employment. A \$50 monthly benefit is provided, recognizing that Albertans fleeing abuse are not necessarily ready to go to work. To start a new life, there's \$430 per month for telephone costs and \$60 per month for transportation costs to enable anybody to make a call for help or to travel for counselling and make legal appointments and any other issues that need to be covered off if women are actually going to successfully leave an abusive household.

So employment and training services are available for jobs as well, not dissimilar from the pilot project this minister is announcing today. But the bottom line is, there's a heck of a lot more that needs to be done on the violence-against-women file.

1410

I would ask the minister to put her mind to putting together some kind of comprehensive plan, not the plan she has announced and reannounced and not yet fully

funded in Ontario that women's groups have been critical of because they see it as piecemeal and ineffective. We need a real, sustainable program that every woman across the province can rely upon to successfully leave an abusive relationship.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery four US state legislators here on a legislative exchange of the Mid-western Legislative Conference. They are Senator Brad Burzynski, from Illinois; Senator Jay Emler, from Kansas; Representative Bill Huizenga, from Michigan; and Representative Karen May, from Illinois. They are joined by Susan Evans, from the Canadian consulate in Chicago, and Ilene Grossman, who is with the Mid-western Legislative Conference of the Council of State Governments.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Acting Premier, and our friends are about to see why they call this "question period" and not "answer period." The government's forestry announcement today is leaving an awful lot of people cold. Under your watch, more than 4,000 direct forestry industry jobs have been lost across northern Ontario due to high electricity prices and many other factors. For those who have lost their jobs and are struggling with the loss of a paycheque and with high energy rates, the Minister of Energy says to them, "Go and buy a blanket and drink some wine." For those struggling to keep their jobs, the government is paying only lip service to their concerns.

For example, after this, the third announcement this government has made in the last couple of years, not one of them being sufficient, Cec Makowski of the CEP, the paperworkers' union, says it's too little, too late. He says you've waited so long that employers are left with little choice but to accept a deal far below what is required.

Why won't this government come forward with a comprehensive plan on jobs for northern Ontario and for the forestry industry? When is it coming?

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): To the Minister of Energy, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): This initiative that the Premier announced today will help the forestry sector, which has been particularly hard hit by a range of variables, including the price of the dollar and the decreasing demand for newsprint throughout North America, to deal with a particularly difficult circumstance they have found themselves in to date. Today, the Premier announced \$140 million that will assist that

industry as it transitions itself to a future marketplace, upgrades its capital stock and generally makes investments in energy efficiency. Taken together, the government has invested over \$1 billion in the forestry sector, which is helping that industry deal with a very, very difficult set of circumstances.

This government remains committed to working with that industry and the people of northern Ontario as the industry transitions not only in Ontario but indeed across Canada and throughout North America.

Mr. Tory: Cec Makowski from the paperworkers' union says that it won't save a single job, and a professor from Lakehead, Livio Di Matteo, says that this program "won't make much of a difference," to quote him. The difficulty of ignoring these issues, as you have done, and leaving it to these piecemeal kinds of announcements is that everything you come up with is insufficient to deal with the real issues. Northern Ontario is in crisis and needs a real, comprehensive program to deal with this.

There are serious problems across the rest of the province as well. Eastern Ontario, for example has seen more than 4,000 jobs lost in the last year and a half: 910 jobs at Domtar, 1,290 at Cascades in Cornwall, 250 jobs at Masterbrand Cabinets in Peterborough. The announcement today does nothing for people in these communities who have lost their jobs.

Since December 8, 2005, we have been asking for a comprehensive jobs plan for the province. Where is it?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: There are challenges in the economy, but I would remind the member that since we took office we've had a net increase in employment in Ontario of 250,000 employees, something the Leader of the Opposition cannot ignore.

Not only has that occurred, but by the investments our government is making—for instance, \$500 million in the automotive sector, which has leveraged \$7 billion of new automotive investment—Ontario is now the leading jurisdiction in North America, with respect to our friend from Michigan. We have become the leading jurisdiction in North America—

Interjection: Don't tell the people of Michigan.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: Ward's Automotive predicts we will.

I remind the member, you voted against that and your party voted against the budget provisions for that.

The forest sector has been buffeted by challenges that are meeting the sector throughout the world. This government has come to the table with more than \$1 billion that will help that industry—and, more importantly, the people who depend on it for their livelihoods—transition to a stronger and brighter future.

We're proud of our record. We'll defend that record.

Mr. Tory: The fact of the matter is that the paperworkers union says not one job will be saved. A professor from Lakehead says it's not going to make any difference. And the other fact of the matter is that you refuse to acknowledge and bring a plan forward on 130,000 manufacturing jobs that have been lost under the McGuinty Liberal government in the past year alone in

this province. It's a disgraceful record and you've brought forward no plan whatsoever to deal with it. You call it a cycle, you call it a little bit of contraction, the Premier says it's inevitable, but no comprehensive plan from you. The Premier, who says Ontario should never lead from the back of the pack, has presided over a government that has us 10th out of 10 in economic growth this year in this country.

To the Acting Premier again: 347 days ago this Legislature passed a resolution with all-party support calling on you to bring forward a comprehensive jobs plan. Where is it? We've seen no such plan. When is it coming at last?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: Two hundred and fifty thousand net new jobs since we took office, in spite of a rising Canadian dollar—that's a record to be proud of. Let me remind the Leader of the Opposition, under your government 8,000 jobs were lost in the north alone. If you want to get quotes about what we announced today, let me give you a few.

Ron Stern, the president and CEO of St. Marys Paper: "I appreciate the province's effort to help our industry through these difficult times. This program will help us deal with our costs and move us toward greater energy efficiency."

David Paterson of Bowater: "The McGuinty government has acted decisively with programs to encourage critical new investment to make wood costs more competitive. Today's announcement is a significant step forward for the Thunder Bay operation and will support our ... initiatives designed to bring our assets to a more competitive position."

This government has responded proactively and positively to a tough situation. We will stand behind the people of northern Ontario. We will work for their jobs, unlike—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. New question?

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): I'm sure the 130,000 families who have lost the jobs will be very comforted to see you breaking your arm patting yourself on the back for all that you claim you've done. You've done nothing for them.

My question is for the Acting Premier. This morning, a water main breakage flooded Lake Shore Boulevard and snarled traffic for thousands and thousands of people during the morning rush hour. The main burst in as many as four places, according to the Toronto Star website. Staff sergeant Dan Cole said, "We're not sure where the breaks are. They keep popping up. There's mud all over the road."

As many as 2,000 pipes burst each year in the city of Toronto alone. My question to the Acting Premier is this: There is currently a \$19-billion infrastructure deficit, which your Premier said he would fix. That's more than double what it was when your party came to office. Your

Premier promised to fix the infrastructure deficit. It has doubled since he's been in office. When are you actually going to do something about it so people don't get caught in these nightmares on Lake Shore Boulevard or anywhere else? When are you going to act?

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): To the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): It takes a lot of chutzpah from a member and a party that downloaded onto municipalities, large and small, around this province. You transferred your problems, sir, onto hard-working taxpayers from around this province, but this government stood up for local communities and local people and came out with a \$30-billion infrastructure investment plan which is making a difference right around this province. I can tell you, it's despite this member and this party opposing these kinds of measures. We've taken these kinds of actions, working collaboratively, providing a number of different investment tools for and with our municipal partners.

Now, the member could help. He could call his friend Steve Harper and make sure that the federal government honours its Canada-Ontario agreement to the tune of over \$1 billion so that we could invest even more. But I don't think this member has the gumption to stand up to his friend Steve.

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Mr. Tory: This government will get to \$30 billion on propaganda ads, hotel rooms and logo changes long before they invest a nickel in infrastructure. The fact is, the infrastructure deficit of this province that causes water main breaks like that has doubled since Dalton McGuinty has been Premier of Ontario. That's what is going on. Now, the expert water—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Stop the clock. I know it's Monday, but the rules are the same: I need to be able to hear the member placing the question. Order. The Minister of Economic Development will come to order. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: We had an expert water panel report released in July 2005, 486 days ago; 486 days of ignoring yet again another group of people hired to give us some advice on this kind of thing. This government sits and does nothing about our water infrastructure, and thousands of people in Ontario are interrupted in their drive to work today, they sit there for hours, and the water infrastructure sits untouched by a McGuinty government that has allowed the infrastructure deficit to double on their watch. When will the government keep its promise, and when will they respond formally to the expert water panel report? When is that going to happen?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Clearly, the member doesn't know what he's talking about. This is the first government to take serious action to address an infrastructure problem which you, sir, and your party tried to download onto municipal communities. This government has taken action.

We did seek advice from experts for water investment, and we are working with—and I know that this is a foreign concept to this member and his party—our partners at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. I myself have met with the executive of AMO to develop a water strategy for this province. We've shared with them the directions. We're talking with them about how we can respond, how we can deliver the kind of investment strategy that has been lacking under the previous government for the past eight years.

This government treats very seriously, amongst a number of things, the almost \$1-billion fund of the Canadian-Ontario municipal rural infrastructure fund, over \$1.3 billion through low-cost OSIFA loans, and much more—

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tory: The minister comes here with these windy answers, and he talks all about a strategy that he himself has personally presided over. The only problem with this great strategy you've presided over is, you've done nothing; absolutely nothing. You've done nothing. The fact is—

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member for Ottawa Centre will come to order. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: The fact is, there are more than 5,000 kilometres of pipes in the city of Toronto, and half of those are more than 50 years old. Your government has yet to enact any of the regulations to Bill 175, the Sustainable Water and Sewage Systems Act, an act that was passed by our party that laid the groundwork for addressing the very deficit you talk about. When are you going to put through these regulations and get on with the job of renewing the water infrastructure of Ontario so that people can have proper infrastructure and not sit in traffic jams because pipe after pipe on street after street bursts on your watch? When are you going to do something about it?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: This member and his party download. This government provides much-needed dollars to municipalities for investment. I was able to give you a partial list, and I'd like to expand on that: \$81.5 million for water and waste water projects in COMRIF intake one; \$1.3 billion for investment in water and waste water right across the province of Ontario through the Ontario Strategic Infrastructure Financing Authority.

I'm sorry that the member opposite finds this amusing, but I've got to tell you, the approach that we've seen from the previous government compared to this one was one of downloading as opposed to action. It's with our municipal partners that we are indeed renewing Ontario to repair the legacy that unfortunately—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

HYDRO RATES

TARIFS D'ÉLECTRICITÉ

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): My question is to the Deputy Premier. Today we heard an

announcement on the part of the McGuinty government with regard to its new policy when it comes to electricity pricing for northern Ontario industry. I can tell you that, by most accounts, listening to the people of northeastern and northwestern Ontario, it's a complete letdown. You've continued down the path of driving hydro rates up. It has caused thousands of jobs to be lost, 45,000 jobs to be specific. And what have we got? We've basically got the government coming back and announcing something that is going to have almost a nil effect when it comes to saving those jobs that were lost up to now.

The northern mayors, industry—everybody was unanimous. Everybody in northern Ontario told you that what you needed to do was to get the price to \$45 per megawatt. You didn't do that. Our question to you is very simply this: Why didn't you? Why did you let the people of northern Ontario down?

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I think that before the honourable member chooses to speak for all the people of northern Ontario, he should take into consideration what some of them had to say today in response to the announcement. Everybody agrees that this is a challenging issue, but here's what Ken Buchanan said. He's the president of Buchanan Forest Products. I believe he resides in the north:

"This is great news for Ontario's forest sector. It helps us stay competitive. It will keep jobs in the north. This is good for our industry and a 'win' for the communities in our region. Our sawmills need pulp and paper operations to use the wood chips they produce, and this helps to ensure that."

We're very mindful of the challenges the forest industry is facing, and the Minister of Energy listed those. In addition to today's announcement: \$350 million in loan guarantees; \$150 million over three years for the forest sector prosperity fund; \$75 million annually for construction and maintenance costs of primary and secondary forest access roads; \$70 million in one-time stumpage fee reduction; \$10 million a year to enhance the forest resource inventory. The point is, we recognize the needs of this sector, and that's why we're responding in a comprehensive way. And it would be nice if, in supplementary, the honourable member could acknowledge that he is not the voice for every person in the north.

Mr. Bisson: I can tell you clearly that we speak for far more people in northern Ontario than the McGuinty government does. I want to share with you a couple of quotes from other northerners who happen to see things the same way. This particular one you might know: Jamie Lim, the president of the OFIA. She says, and this is an interesting quote: "Right now, Ontario companies are investing, but it's not in Ontario." That speaks volumes. It basically says that electricity prices have gone through the roof and, as an effect of that, companies are investing outside of Ontario.

I say again, we asked you specifically. The people of northern Ontario, the mayors, industry, unions—everybody was on side. Why didn't you deliver?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: For the purposes of debate, the honourable member is only able to bring in quotes that are not current from today's announcement. Why is that? He stands today and says that his party speaks for more people in the north. I think that's a little bit of an outrageous circumstance—giving the decision points of the people in the north—with respect to their democratic responsibilities.

Here's what Jim Lopez, the president and CEO of Tembec, said today: "The program announced today is a significant step both in terms of closing the gap on power rates with competing jurisdictions and helping companies generate the funds that will support investments to make their mills less dependent on purchased energy. We applaud and thank Premier McGuinty and Minister Ramsay for their leadership, their perseverance and their support."

The point is, everybody's right in acknowledging that the forest sector has real challenges, and it would be very much more fair if they acknowledged that today's announcement has met with agreeable response from many, an acknowledgement that responding in a comprehensive way is the best response to address the underlying challenges for Ontario's very prominent forest sector.

Mr. Bisson: It doesn't hide the reality that hydro prices continue to go through the roof. This announcement is going to do nothing to bring the workers back in the sawmill sector and in most of the paper sector across Ontario. We have seen thousands of layoffs across the north and in other places in Ontario when it comes to electricity prices, and your government is tinkering at the edges. I've spoken to some of the people that you talked to, and what they're saying is that this is akin to being in a river when you're about to go down and a twig comes by and you grab it. At the end of the day, you're still going to go down.

I say to you again, what are you going to do to respond to the very direct issue that was raised with you and asked of you by the people of northern Ontario when it comes to electricity prices, which is to match what they asked you for at 4.5 cents per kilowatt hour all in?

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Hon. Mr. Smitherman: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): The member opposite and his leader have more positions on this than the Kama Sutra.

Let me tell you what your leader said about regional pricing. Let me tell you what he said. He said it means that not only will the cost of electricity itself rapidly move up, but the cost of transmitting the electricity would increase as well.

The price of industrial electricity is lower today than it was two and a half years ago when we took office. The price is expected to go down. This government has invested more than \$1 billion in the forest sector industry.

Let me give you a couple of more quotes, further on that issue, from a number of the forest sector leaders.

Ken Buchanan has been quoted. John Weaver: "We applaud the efforts of the Premier and Minister Ramsay to find ways to improve forest industry competitiveness." That's John Weaver, president and CEO of Abitibi-Consolidated.

The industry has been challenged by everything from a higher dollar to a whole range of other factors. This government has—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. New question.

Mr. Bisson: To the Deputy Premier—and imagine that: a Liberal accusing a New Democrat of taking multiple positions. How laughable. You're the party that, when in opposition, was opposed to the Conservative Party policy on electricity. You campaigned against it, you said you were going to reverse it, and now what you're doing is accelerating at 100 miles an hour.

To the Deputy Premier, I say it again in regards to what people in northern Ontario are saying. This is from Livio Di Matteo, who says, "My gut feeling is that most of the closures that have occurred are going to stay in place."

It's clear that this is not going to work. I ask you again, when are you going to do what the people of northern Ontario asked you to do, and that is to get an electricity price in at 4.5 cents per kilowatt hour, all-in?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: With all due respect to the honourable member, he relies on the advice of a professor who says that their gut instinct is this, that or the other. We'd rather rely on those who are involved in making independent investment decisions on a daily basis with respect to Ontario's forestry sector. We acknowledge there are serious concerns there. That's why we've had a comprehensive response over a period of several different initiatives.

I'd put the words of Ken Buchanan, a well-known figure in northern Ontario who runs Buchanan Forest Products, up against the gut instinct of a professor from a university. Here's what Buchanan said, to remind the honourable member: "This is great news for Ontario's forest sector. It helps us stay competitive. It will keep jobs in the north. This is good for our industry and a 'win' for communities in our region."

Today's announcement is an acknowledgment of our willingness to work alongside communities in the north and the forestry sector. We made important progress today and we acknowledge that this sector will require us to continue to work with them in strong partnership on behalf of Ontario.

M. Bisson: C'est clair que le ministre ne veut pas répondre à la question. On sait qu'il y a des milliers d'emplois qui ont été perdus au nord de l'Ontario à cause de votre politique faisant affaire avec l'électricité.

Si on regarde ce qui est arrivé à Weyerhaeuser, à Dryden, 385 emplois ont été perdus. Cette annonce ne va rien faire pour renverser ces pertes d'emplois. À Domtar, à Nairn Centre, où mon ami M. Charlie Angus et moi avons été jeudi passé, 255 employés ont perdu leur emploi. L'employeur dit que c'est à cause du prix de

l'électricité. Cette annonce ne fait absolument rien pour répondre aux besoins de cette industrie et de ramener ces travailleurs à l'ouvrage.

Je vous envoie cette liste de ceux qui ont perdu leur emploi à travers la province. Je vous demande encore, allez-vous changer d'idée et faire ce qu'on vous a demandé, d'amener le prix de l'électricité selon le 4,5 cents le kilowattheure qu'on a demandé au nord de l'Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: I remind the member opposite that on his watch, 14 mills shut down under the NDP, and what did they do in response to that? They cancelled the forestry management agreement and road funding. And what else did they do? They raised industrial electricity prices 40% in three short years. Under our watch, industrial electricity prices have come down.

We are investing in conservation; we are investing in new technologies and renewable resources. As long as one person is looking for a job, as long as one family is hurting because of a layoff, this government won't rest. That's why we've invested \$1 billion, that's why the announcement is well accepted by the industry, and that is why we will continue to pursue an aggressive approach to solving the problems of that industry for the working men and women of the north who depend on that industry for their livelihoods.

Mr. Bisson: I'll tell you what's resting in northern Ontario: the thousands of workers who have lost their jobs because of your hydroelectric policies. For you to come into this House today, as you did in northern Ontario, and announce a policy that falls short of what was asked for by the people of northern Ontario is a letdown to the people of northern Ontario. For three long years, while mills shut down, people lost their jobs and local economies got hammered—but you continue to duck the question. I ask the minister: Why didn't you deliver the \$45-dollars-a-megawatt industrial rate to sustain jobs that was asked for by the people of northern Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: This government has responded in a multiplicity of ways to the challenge faced by the forest sector industry. Let me reiterate for the member opposite, who has acknowledged that the challenges in that industry go well beyond the price of electricity. Let me tell you, the \$1 billion—everything from roads through to energy efficiency for that industry, which is now well accepted by the industry, by communities in the north, recognizing the enormous challenge that that industry faces—has been the appropriate response in a timely fashion that is assisting this industry, an industry that is suffering in Quebec, Newfoundland, Saskatchewan, Texas, throughout North America. This is the appropriate response. It gives a competitive edge and prepares the north for a future that's brighter in the pulp and paper industry because of that investment, because of this government working for the north in such a proactive fashion.

COAL-FIRED GENERATING STATIONS

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): My question is for the Minister of Energy. I noticed that the Acting Premier made comments saying that you guys only rely on real expert testimony and advice. Well, Minister, your Premier has had quite a time spinning a new tale every day about his coal shutdown policy and the expert advice he got on it.

This is about credibility and integrity. I'm going to read to you what you said to me and the members of the committee on estimates, Minister. I asked you, "You're talking about your coal promise. You said you consulted with a number of different people. I would like to know who those people were." Your reply was, "I'll provide you with the full list, but I can tell you, we had lots...."

Minister, is a promise made to a committee of this Legislature for you people the same as a promise made to the people of Ontario: one that you can break when you are out fishing for votes?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): This government remains committed to closing down coal-fired generation in Ontario, as I said last week, and I'll say it again. The Premier acknowledged, quite properly, that it has been a challenge to meet the timelines as originally outlined. That being said, we remain committed to the goal. Already there's a 17% reduction in the amount of time coal-fired generation is used in the province. We have seen a 28% decrease in SO₂, a 34% decrease in nitrous oxide and a 15% decrease in CO₂.

We remain committed to eliminating coal-fired generation in Ontario in a timely fashion, in a way that protects the reliability of the system in Ontario, recognizing the enormous health benefits we will achieve as a result of the policy commitment.

Mr. Yakabuski: Minister, I'd appreciate it if you'd just quit spewing out your own emissions and answer the question.

Your own colleagues in this House are having to answer questions in their own ridings about your Premier's integrity, about your Premier's commitment. He has said that he relied on the advice of experts. Then, Minister, I'm asking you: You committed to a committee of this Legislature to reveal those names so that people could make their own judgment. Minister, either give us the names now or admit that they never existed, that you and your Premier made the whole thing up, because you will say anything and you will do anything just to get a vote. Will you admit that or reveal those names now?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: What we acknowledge is that the coal-fired generation remains a major challenge to all governments and all parties, and the elimination of that coal-fired generation is in everyone's interests, from a health perspective, from an environmental perspective.

We remain committed and have asked the power authority for its independent advice on how best to achieve the shutdown of coal-fired generation. That has proven to be a most challenging goal but it is one that we remain firmly committed to in the interest of the health of all Ontarians and in the interest of a cleaner environment,

which serves the interest of all the people of this great province.

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ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): My question is for the Minister of Energy. Friday's quarterly OPG report demolishes the claims of your Chief Energy Conservation Officer, Peter Love. In his report, Mr. Love attributed a decline in power usage to your government's conservation efforts. But OPG president, Jim Hankinson, says that along with more moderate weather, "the decline in activity in some sectors of the economy also held down the overall demand for power." Your very weak efforts were not even mentioned.

Minister, will you admit that just about the only thing you've done to reduce demand for power is to eliminate 136,000 good-paying manufacturing and resource sector jobs? Will you admit that?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): This government has worked hard at bringing conservation in electricity to Ontario. I will remind the member: 57,000 megawatt hours saved annually with in-house conservation projects; 9,000 megawatt hours saved this summer with the industrial demand response program; 50,000 megawatt hours saved this summer through Hydro's summer challenge—that's the equivalent of 5,000 homes—12,000 megawatt hours saved exclusively through London Hydro's fridge retirement program.

There's been growth in our economy over the last few years, including the last year. It's the first time where there's been overall growth in the economy that we've seen decreases in the actual rate of growth in the electricity being used.

Conservation is an enormous challenge. We remain committed to it. That's why we created the conservation bureau. That's why we've invested \$2 billion in conservation. That's why we will continue on with this program. It's important for our health, environment and economy.

Mr. Tabuns: Minister, you can recite as many lists as you want. If you don't have impact, you don't have impact.

OPG is not the only energy body that takes issue with your chief conservation officer. According to the IESO's 18-month outlook—the report was released on October 2—"Despite the record peak demand set this summer, the reduced energy-intensive industrial load has led to lower energy demand in 2006 and throughout the forecast." In other words, your very weak efforts don't even hit the radar for the IESO.

Will you admit that your conservation plan is a failure, that the only thing you've done to reduce demand is devastate Ontario's manufacturing and resource-based regions?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: This member, who prior to coming here wrote us a letter and applauded our pricing policy—

Interjection: I remember that.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: I remember that. I've got the quote right here.

Let me tell you—you weren't here so I can't blame you—your friends who were here at the time all voted against Bill 21, our Energy Conservation Responsibility Act. Mr. Kormos, Mr. Marchese, Mr. Bisson were here in the early 1990s. Between 1993 and 1995, Ontario Hydro ended all conservation initiatives. For instance, the R-2000 homes, project cancelled; power saver month, project cancelled; refrigerator cashback, project cancelled; energy-efficient lighting, project cancelled; street lighting, project cancelled.

We have said that achieving a culture of conservation is an enormous undertaking. What we are doing today should have started in the early 1990s. Had it, we'd be much further along. That being said, we are going to proceed to aggressively pursue energy conservation in the interests of the economy and in—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I'd like to bring to members' attention, in the members' west gallery we have Bob Frankford, who was the member from Scarborough East in the 35th Parliament.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I have a question today for the Minister of Education. On November 6, you came to Oakville to see the great staff and the students at Oakwood Public School. We were all pleased to see that you were able to visit the school, and we were all able to see that the McGuinty government is reaching every student in Oakville through the investments we've provided in my community. Oakwood Public School is in the heart of the Kerr area of Oakville. It offers a number of great initiatives, including the Breakfast for Learning program and the all-star reading program. It's got one of the best parent involvements in all of Oakville.

During your visit, you met with members of the Halton board and the Halton Catholic board. After the visit, I heard great positive feedback from those who met you. They feel that finally there is a government that is listening to what is happening in our community.

As you know, one of the topics you discussed was the issue of growth. Can you share with this House some of the investments that the McGuinty government has made to address the concern of growth?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): Thank you to the member for Oakville. It was a great pleasure to visit Oakwood, and I will always remember that little stair climber in the reading resource room; I think that is a brilliant idea for kids who need to blow off some steam.

We've made a number of investments in Halton, including about a 4% increase in transportation to both the public and the Catholic boards. But the Halton board

is a classic poster child for one of the problems with the funding formula when we were elected. In the way boards were able to expand and build new schools, the funding really was only generated for boards that were expanding evenly across their jurisdiction. There was a problem with boards that had pockets of growth. So one of the major changes we've made that has benefited Halton is that we've created a new grant in the funding formula called the growth schools grant. What we've done is, we've listened to the boards that were having this issue of one area growing and one area of declining enrolment, and we changed the way the funding mechanism works so that in this growth schools grant, this year we are going to provide \$10 million that will support \$137 million of new school construction that will specifically address boards like Halton.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Supplementary?

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): The McGuinty government is clearly reaching every student across Ontario, from Oakville to my riding of Nipissing. You recently came to the great riding of Nipissing, and during that time we visited four different school boards, four different schools. We visited Almaguin Highlands Secondary School in Sundridge; we visited Saint-Thomas-D'Aquin in Astorville, St. Theresa's in Callander and l'Odyssée in North Bay. The tour was a tremendous success and the feedback has been great. All were so impressed by your commitment and your knowledge of the field. The investments the McGuinty government is making in my riding are certainly making a difference in boosting student achievement.

Minister, you will remember Almaguin Highlands Secondary School; it was one of the schools we visited. There's been much talk about Almaguin of late because it is, as you know, on the prohibitive-to-repair list. This school services the southern part of my riding. It offers many student success initiatives and has a strong focus on the technical field. Can you tell this House some of the investments that we're making with respect to new schools and what the process is for dealing with some of our older schools such as Almaguin?

Hon. Ms. Wynne: It's really easy to be enthusiastic about public education in this province when you see arts programs like Peter Camani's classroom and the cooking classroom of Kelly Maki. They are just fantastic teachers doing just a great job.

The issue of prohibitive-to-repair is the one I want to address, because it specifically speaks to the issue in Nipissing. The age of some of the facilities and the fact that some repairs haven't been done have meant that there are schools where it would cost more to replace the school than to build a new one. There is currently a list of schools that has been prepared across the province. What the ministry is doing right now is talking to the boards around the province to make sure that the schools that should be on that list are indeed on that list. What we'll do is, once that list has been vetted and we understand that the correct schools are on the list, the boards will be

able to apply for funding to retire schools on the list. They will be able to replace the school on the same site or nearby, replace several schools with one new school, or close the school and expand into new facilities. That process is underway now.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): My question is for the Minister of Health. Since the introduction of Bill 102, we have said that your drug reform bill was all about cost containment and not about improved access for patients to drugs. We are now hearing from hundreds of retired federal public servants who have been contacting us to express their shock that the provincial government is going to discriminate against them by denying them the same benefits under the ODB plan that apply to all other retirees. You are going to ask them to foot the bill for their drugs when they purchase them, and then they're going to have to seek reimbursement from the federal plan, which will only cover 80% of their costs.

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I ask you, today, Minister, in response to the hundreds of letters that we are receiving: Why are you discriminating against these federal pensioners while the others are still going to have full coverage?

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'd like to take this opportunity just at the beginning of my response to welcome all those doctors who are here as part of the Ontario Medical Association's Doctor Day.

Indeed, we have sought to gain the same result from the federal government vis-à-vis their employees as the federal government employees enjoy in Quebec and Nova Scotia. This would be an equitable response for Ontario, where more of these costs would be borne by the government of Canada for their pensioners. I just want to reiterate that in seeking to gain that equitable access, we would want to ensure that all pensioners have the status quo—federal employees, that is—in terms of their current benefits and also costs. But I do acknowledge that we are working to try and obtain a greater degree of support from the federal government for the responsibility of providing drug benefits to their pensioners in line with what they're doing with respect to the provinces of Quebec and Nova Scotia. Our motivation here entirely is equity for Ontarians, with equitable access for those pensioners, and we'll work to ensure that that is what occurs.

Mrs. Witmer: If it's equity you're looking for, if you look at the article in the Ottawa Citizen on November 1, yes, Nova Scotia and Quebec did take similar steps. However, they shifted the cost not just to the federal government; they shifted the cost to all employers, and they didn't single out just federal pensioners.

So I ask you again, Minister: What are you prepared to do in order to make sure that these federal pensioners are not made to feel like second-class citizens in the province

of Ontario and be forced to pick up part of their drug costs that are not going to be reimbursed by the federal plan?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: In the latter part of my answer, I already committed to that. But what I didn't hear from the honourable member was a commitment on her part to support an initiative that's designed to ensure that the people of the province of Ontario, all of them, are receiving the same degree of financial support vis-à-vis the federal government in its responsibilities to its pensioners. The matter at hand is a matter of tens of millions of dollars, and we seek here in Ontario to be able to use those resources to expand access to a broader range of drugs. I would say on this point that although Bill 102 has only very recently passed, we are already in a position in our province to bring in new drugs to the formulary.

But again, I tell the honourable member that it's completely our intention to ensure that federal pensioners are receiving exactly the same circumstances as we go forward, only we are seeking the federal government to play a bigger role in sharing those costs, consistent with what they're doing in other provinces, because we think this is important equity on behalf of all the people in Ontario.

INJURED WORKERS

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is for the Deputy Premier. Before the last election, Liberal MPPs promised workers that a Liberal government would restore cost-of-living indexing to workers' compensation cheques. Three years have come and gone since then and injured workers are still waiting for that promise to be kept. Deputy Premier, will the McGuinty government keep its promise to injured workers and introduce legislation to index the compensation payments that injured workers receive?

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, perhaps she should look to her right and look down in front as to who started the downward spiral for injured worker benefits in this province. We can look with pride to the work that Bill Wrye and the Liberal government put in place, and then in 1994, the NDP introduced the Friedland formula. So judge not. That was further accelerated by the Conservative Party in 1998. So look at yourself in the mirror, I say to the honourable member, and look at who has caused this dilemma that the injured workers find themselves in.

We've been working very closely with the injured workers' groups and the WSIB. One of the first things that we did when we took office was to bring the affairs of the WSIB to order. I commend the WSIB for the efforts that they've made. We've seen increases that were put in place on January 1—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary.

Ms. Horwath: The minister claims to be working closely with injured workers. What he would know is that injured workers don't want more finger pointing; they want their cheques protected from inflation. That's what they want.

Since your government has done nothing to address this issue, I'm going to be introducing a New Democratic Party private member's bill which is going to index WSIB for injured workers to the cost of living. Minister, why is the McGuinty government leaving it to a private member of the New Democratic Party to introduce indexing for injured workers through cost-of-living legislation, when you should and could have brought forward similar legislation yourself, which is exactly what injured workers want?

Hon. Mr. Peters: I just can't believe this member, that the party that really put it to the injured workers is now standing up and trying to be their biggest advocate. We have been working very closely with the WSIB. As an example, we've seen changes made to the rates for injured workers' expenses: a 10% increase in transportation allowance; a 2.6% increase in personal care and independent living; guide dog and support dog allowances; maximum clothing allowance increases from \$255 to \$500; elimination of a room and board allowance; and the removal of the \$600 cap. As well, we've moved forward on our initiative to bring the financial affairs of the WSIB in order, something that you had no handle on at all when you were in government. We're very conscious of it.

I would say to the honourable member that we do have a new chair in place at the WSIB. I've had the opportunity to meet with Mr. Mahoney, the new chair of the WSIB, and I've asked Mr. Mahoney to bring forward to me options as to how we can go forward to further improve benefits for injured workers.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Today is National Child Day. It's a day that marks the adoption in Canada of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1993. This year's theme is "The Right to Be Heard!" and calls on all Canadians to listen to the voices and ideas of children and their participation in society.

The McGuinty government strongly supports children in Ontario. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services was created by the McGuinty government in 2003 to better coordinate that support. The Best Start plan is a good example of how this commitment is being turned into tangible action in our communities across the province. Minister, could you give us an update on the status of the Best Start plan?

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): I'm very pleased to have this opportunity not just to recognize National Child Day but also to thank my colleague the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex not just for her advocacy but

also for her leadership for early learning and child care in rural areas. In fact, her success rate and the success being enjoyed by her communities is really quite admirable; it's outstanding. They are at almost 90% of their three-year target in the first year of the early learning and child care expansion initiative in this province. That is as a result of their commitment to their kids and my colleague's leadership. We will be expanding that program with more child care subsidies, more programs to engage communities in lower—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

Mrs. Van Bommel: Thank you for your kind words. Certainly, as a grandmother and a parent in a rural community, trying to raise children in a rural community, I understand how very important the Best Start program has been to my riding and how appreciated it is by the parents of the communities in my riding. But also, Minister, Best Start is really only one example of what this government is doing in supporting children in Ontario. I was wondering if you could tell us what other programs and initiatives your ministry is pursuing to improve outcomes and success for Ontario's children.

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: As an example, children are being diagnosed for hearing impairment at the age of four months now, not two and a half years, as it used to be. That's very significant. More than 4,800 more kids are receiving complex needs care and therapies through our children's treatment centres. Kids with autism are no longer being discharged from IBI services at age six, which is what the previous government had provided in terms of services for them. In fact, right now, approximately 60% of the kids receiving IBI services are aged six or over in this province. We have extended the powers of the provincial auditor to protect kids who are in the care of our children's aid societies. We have introduced and passed legislation which will be proclaimed at the end of this month, again, to provide more permanency for children in care, more accountability for children's aid societies and a more independent, transparent—

The Speaker: Thank you. New Question.

1500

COAL-FIRED GENERATING STATIONS

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, we're going to try this again. Your Premier used the shield of so-called expert testimony to justify a policy that has proven to be unattainable and ridiculous. What the people of Ontario are now asking is for you to follow through on your commitment to give the names of those so-called experts who led you to believe that this was a doable thing, because the change in energy policy as a result of your failed commitment has cost the people of Ontario billions of dollars.

Minister, you told a standing committee of this Legislature—you are quoted in Hansard—that you would provide the names of those people. Will you do as you

told the standing committee under testimony and provide those names, or admit that they were all made up, that they don't exist? What is it, Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): What the people of Ontario are calling for is an elimination of coal-fired generation, and we are moving in that direction. We acknowledge and accept responsibility for the fact that the dates we set out were difficult to achieve. We're moving forward in a fashion that will close the plants. We sought the assistance of the independent Ontario Power Authority. Our plan is clean air; their plan is coal forever. We've had enough of that. We're going to continue to work towards achieving the policy objective of eliminating coal-fired generation in Ontario.

Mr. Yakabuski: Minister, this question is not about policy; it is about honesty and integrity and respect for this Legislature. You told a standing committee on September 26—you're quoted in Hansard—that you as the Minister of Energy would undertake to provide those names. This is not about your energy policy. We can debate that another time, and I can assure you we will. This is about your honesty, your integrity and your respect for this Legislature. We have visitors from another country. Show them that when you make a commitment to members of this body, you will follow through. Provide those names or admit once and for all that you made the whole thing up, that you will say anything, that you will do anything if it means a vote for the Liberal Party here in the province of Ontario.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: I can assure you that air quality is not made up. I can assure you that climate change is not made up. I can assure you, unlike the member opposite, that we will continue to pursue the challenge of elimination of coal-fired generation. We are bringing to bear all of the resources available to us to do that in a timely fashion that protects the integrity of Ontario's electricity system. It's time to keep moving forward. We've got a 17% reduction already, and we're going to continue to move in that direction. We believe that it's in the public interest from a health and environmental perspective, and we will continue to work to achieve that very noble goal.

CHILD ADVOCATE

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Today is National Child Day. The McGuinty government pays lip service to the needs of Ontario children, but has yet to fulfill its promise of an independent child advocate. The McGuinty government promised this would happen as far back as 2004. So my question is very simple: Why has the McGuinty government broken its promise to children? Why doesn't Ontario have an independent child advocate?

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): I thank the member from Hamilton East for her question and for her genuine interest in this matter. I am going to be encouraging you to provide us with the support we will need for very

speedy passage of this legislation, which I am anticipating will be coming forward in the very, very near future.

Ms. Horwath: I appreciate the minister's desire to get the legislation forward, but that desire has not been fulfilled over the past several years, and I'm really wondering who it is that's holding up this legislation from coming forward. The reality is that children and youth in Ontario have no one independently overseeing their issues and concerns, no one to tell you to stop clawing back the national child benefit from low-income kids.

Your government promised independence for the children's advocate, but you didn't deliver. When—and I don't want to hear “in the near future”; let's have a detailed date—will you finally keep your promise and give the children's advocate full independence, as you promised?

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: I'll not repeat my previous answer because my previous answer still stands. But I noticed with interest a member from the opposition applauding when, in fact, the primary reason why our government felt it was necessary to introduce this legislation is because her party, the Tories, were muzzling the advocate. That's not how we protect the interests of children in this province. But I can assure you that the member from Hamilton East has a genuine commitment, and, on my part, that we will see this legislation in the very near future.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Due to the fact that the Minister of Energy would not even address—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): That's not a point of order. We don't play games during—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Yes, and you may file for a late show at the table according to the standing orders any time you want before 5 o'clock.

New question.

MANDATORY RETIREMENT

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): My question is to the Minister of Labour. Last December, an historic bill, Bill 211, was passed in this Legislature. For those who don't remember, Bill 211 was all about putting an end to mandatory retirement in Ontario. It will come into effect in less than one month, on December 12, 2006, and will finally bring an end to discrimination against our older workers.

Minister, forcing people to retire when they reach an arbitrary age is wrong; 65 is not what it used to be, and by no means have we reached our expiration date by that time. Some of the most active volunteers in my riding are seniors over the age of 65. They still have a lot to give, and prove it with their contributions. When I talk to them at events in the riding, these men and women tell me that, while they enjoy the satisfaction of volunteering, many of them miss the joys and challenges of their old positions as teachers, civil servants and the like.

For many of us, work is more than a paycheque. It provides a sense of self worth, a purpose and, in the case of older, experienced workers, a chance to mentor and guide. Minister, as we approach December 12, please remind this House why our government chose to abolish mandatory retirement.

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): I want to thank the member from Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh for his question. It's a very simple answer: It is the right thing to do. We made a commitment to end the practice of discriminatory mandatory retirement in this province because it is wrong to force capable, experienced and knowledgeable citizens to stop working merely because they've reached a particular age. Somebody's skills or abilities do not stop once they turn age 65. Furthermore, society should not lose the benefit of skilled and experienced workers and those benefits that they can bring to workplaces.

Mandatory retirement is an outdated concept in our modern society, in which we live longer and healthier lives. Our government believes that all Ontarians deserve the right to choose when they want to retire, not just a few, such as politicians and the self-employed. As of December 12, 2006, Ontarians 65 years or older will have the choice to continue working if they so choose. Many will choose not to, as they do now. While the trend for early retirement is growing, we believe that all Ontarians should have that right to choose when to retire.

Mr. Brownell: Thank you, Minister, for reminding us of one more way in which our government has improved the lives of ordinary Ontarians. I know that my constituents are pleased that this government values the contributions of older, experienced workers. In fact, many of my constituents who are in this category, some of whom have been forced to retire, have a lot to say on this subject.

1510

I have been to a number of retirement parties where the honourees have indicated that they would like to stay around a bit longer, that they felt they still had something to contribute. It is even more difficult for those who have turned 65 since Bill 211 received royal assent last year. Were it not for the one-year transition period, these individuals may have been able to keep working, ensuring that there was one more much-needed nurse in a hospital or educator in a classroom.

Minister, the one-year transition period has been a great disappointment to the many workers who find themselves celebrating their 65th birthdays before December 12, 2006. Could you explain why you chose to impose a one-year transition period instead of allowing this legislation to take effect immediately last year?

Hon. Mr. Peters: I want to thank the member for the question. It is a good question. We chose a one-year transition because we had to give employers an opportunity to prepare for the date of December 12, 2006. We recognized that mandatory retirement would require a shift in attitude and a shift in practice. Some employers, for instance, may have had to adapt their human re-

sources policies and practices to comply with the new legislation; others needed to discuss changes to collective agreements. Our government thoroughly considered all of the issues and concerns before embarking on this legislation and we proceeded in a manner that was fair and reasonable. For this reason, the act was chosen to have the one-year transition for royal assent. I understand that some individuals are not happy, but we had to put the one-year transition in place to ensure that everything was in place.

I can assure the member that there's nothing stopping employers from voluntarily allowing their workers to continue working beyond the age of 65 prior to that December 12 date. The transition period was necessary in order for us to be adequately prepared—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. New question?

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby–Ajax): My question is for the Attorney General. On April 26, 2006, during first reading of Bill 107, your proposed human rights reform legislation, you said, "We would ensure that, regardless of levels of income, abilities, disabilities or personal circumstances, all Ontarians would be entitled to share in receiving equal and effective protection of human rights, and all will receive that full legal representation."

Last week, in what was described by a presenter at the Bill 107 committee hearings as a public hearing by ambush, you announced certain amendments to be tabled by your government, including an amendment regarding a proposed human rights legal support centre. As taken from your website, the proposed amendment reads, "The minister would establish a Human Rights Legal Support Centre to provide a range of services including information, support, advice, assistance and legal representation."

Minister, the way this amendment is worded is vague at best. Will this amendment guarantee that all Ontarians will receive full legal representation by a lawyer, as promised?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues): Michael, remind them about the bully bill.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): In the supplementary I'll remind them about the bully bill.

As members know, the rules applying to the submission of amendments require not that they be introduced on the first day of public hearings, but rather that they be introduced, subject to certain timelines, in advance of clause-by-clause. It was in the interest of being able to discuss and debate and have people appearing before the committee consider the amendments that we introduced those amendments in advance of clause-by-clause. It was for that very reason that we did something that, when the Conservatives were in power, they

never did, which was to put those amendments before the committee. Not only did the Conservative government not put amendments before the committee in advance, but they didn't even bother having any public hearings for any of their bills. So it is precisely because we did this that the member is able to ask her question right now and, to answer the member's question, yes, that's what I said when I introduced the bill and I stand beside those words.

VISITORS

Mr. Vic Dhillon (Brampton West–Mississauga): I would just like to introduce some friends who are here in the gallery today: Gurminder Gill, Jujhar Mahal, Davinder Khannewala, Gurpal Singh, Pinky Boparai, Ravi and Gurpreet Chohan.

PETITIONS

HEALTH PREMIUMS

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas, according to the Department of National Defence, there are over 30,000 serving military personnel calling Ontario home; and

"Whereas, according to the most recent census data, there are more than 1.6 million senior citizens over the age of 65 living in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario plans on eliminating this ... tax for all Ontarians after it forms the government in 2007; and

"Whereas, as an interim measure, the ... health tax should be removed from those who protect Canada and those who have built Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, call on the government of Ontario to immediately eliminate the ... health tax, beginning with serving military personnel and senior citizens."

I've also signed this.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It comes from the Newcomer Women's Services of Toronto. I'd like to thank especially Gordon Crann and Libby Ackerman for their help in gathering the signatures. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

"Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent, arbitrary and unnecessary

obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

"Whereas action by Ontario's trades and professions could remove many such barriers, but Ontario's trades and professions have failed to recognize that such structural barriers exist, much less to take action to remove them, and to provide fair, timely, transparent and cost-effective access to trades and professions for new Canadians trained outside Canada;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario Legislative Assembly urge the members of all parties to swiftly pass Bill 124, the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006, and to require Ontario's regulated professions and trades to review and modify their procedures and qualification requirements to swiftly meet the needs of Ontario's employers, Ontario's newcomers and their own membership, all of whom desperately need the very skills new Canadians bring working for their organizations, for their trades and professions, and for their families."

I'm pleased to affix my signature in support of this petition and ask Page Or to carry it for me.

PROSTATE CANCER

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): It's a pleasure to present a petition today on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham, which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas prostate specific antigen (PSA) tests are frequently used to screen patients for prostate conditions, including cancer; and

"Whereas there is currently a double standard because men usually pay to have a PSA test as part of a routine medical examination, while women have all cancer screening tests covered by OHIP;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, urge the province of Ontario to review its policy on funding PSA testing for men with a view to including this as a service wholly covered by OHIP," and therefore not discriminating in any way for access to health care in Ontario.

I'm pleased to sign and endorse this and present it to Daniel.

POVERTY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): I'm pleased to present this petition on behalf of Parkdale Collegiate Institute, the majority of whose students brought this to our attention. It says:

"Whereas Canada is one of the richest nations, and yet it has one of the worst records on poverty of all the developed nations. According to Statistics Canada, 14.4% of children in Ontario live in poverty. We want to know what you, as our government, will do to end poverty in Ontario; and

"We ask that you bring in the \$10 minimum wage now."

Of course I agree with this petition, and I'm happy to affix my signature.

1520

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly in support of measures to preserve cross-border travel. I especially want to thank the clients and staff of Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services in Mississauga for having submitted this petition. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the United States government, through the western hemisphere travel initiative, is proposing that US citizens will require a passport or single-purpose travel card to cross the Canada-US border; and

"Whereas a passport or single-purpose travel card would be an added expense, and the inconvenience of having to apply for and carry a new document would be a barrier for many Canadian and US cross-border travellers; and

"Whereas the George Bush government proposal could mean the loss of as many as 3.5 million US visitors to Ontario, and place in peril as many as 7,000 jobs in the Ontario tourism industry by 2008, many of which are valuable entry-level jobs for youth and new Canadians; and

"Whereas many of the US states bordering Canada have expressed similar concerns regarding the punitive economic impact of this plan, and both states and provinces along the US-Canada border recognize the importance of the safe and efficient movement of people across that border is vital to the economies of both countries;

"Be it therefore resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario support the establishment of a bi-national group to establish an alternative to the proposed US border requirements, and inform Prime Minister Harper that his decision not to advocate on behalf of Ontarians is ill-advised, and contrary to the responsibilities of elected representatives in Canada."

This is an excellent petition. I'm pleased to affix my signature and to ask page Andrew to carry it for me.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas age-related macular degeneration ... is the leading cause of blindness in the elderly and is present in some form in 25% to 33% of seniors over the age of 75. AMD has two forms: the more common 'dry' type and the 'wet' type. Although the wet type occurs in only 15% of AMD patients, these patients account for 90% of the legal blindness that occurs with AMD. The wet type is further subdivided into classic and occult subtypes, based on the appearance of the AMD on special testing.

Photodynamic therapy, a treatment where abnormal blood vessels are closed with a laser-activated chemical, has been shown to slow the progression of vision loss in both subtypes of wet AMD;

"Whereas OHIP has not extended coverage for photodynamic therapy to the occult subtype of wet AMD, despite there being substantial clinical evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of this treatment in patients with either form of wet AMD. Untreated, these patients can expect a progression in their visual loss, with central blindness as the end result;

"Whereas affected patients are in a position where a proven treatment is available to help preserve their vision, but this treatment can only be accessed at their own personal expense. Treatment costs are between \$12,500 and \$18,000 over an 18-month period. Many patients resign themselves to a continued worsening of their vision, as for them the treatment is financially unattainable. The resultant blindness in these patients manifests itself as costs to society in other forms, such as an increased need for home care, missed time from work for family members providing care, and an increased rate of injuries such as hip fractures that can be directly attributable to their poor vision.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to fund the treatment of the occult subtype of macular degeneration with photodynamic therapy for all patients awaiting this service."

I'm pleased to sign my name to this and present it to Kelsea to give back to the table.

FAIR ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I have a petition:

"In Support of Skilled Immigrants—Bill 124

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government is committed to establishing measures that will break down barriers for Ontario newcomers; and

"Whereas these measures will ensure that the 34 regulatory professions in Ontario have admissions and application practices that are fair, clear and open; and

"Whereas these measures will include the establishment of a fairness commissioner and an access centre for internationally trained individuals; and

"Whereas, through providing a fair and equitable system, newcomers will be able to apply their global experience, which will not only be beneficial to their long-term career goals but also to the Ontario economy as a whole;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"That all members of the House support the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006, Bill 124, and work to ensure its prompt passage in the Ontario Legislature."

I agree with this petition and affix my signature.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to present another petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham, which reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned, who are members of family councils, residents' councils and/or supporters of long-term care in Ontario, petition the Liberal government and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase operating funding to long-term-care homes by \$306.6 million, which will allow the hiring of more staff to provide an additional 20 minutes of care per resident per day over the next two years (2006 and 2007)."

This is presented in the context of Bill 140 on long-term care. I'm pleased to sign and support it, and I hand it to Sarah on their behalf.

COMMUNITY MEDIATION

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have another petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly in support of community mediation, and I especially want to thank Jennifer Leung for having organized these signatures. She's from Starwood Drive in Mississauga. It reads as follows:

"Whereas many types of civil disputes may be resolved through community mediation delivered by trained mediators, who are volunteers who work with the parties in the dispute; and

"Whereas Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services established the Peel Community Mediation Service in 1999 with support from the government of Ontario through the Trillium Foundation, the Rotary Club of Mississauga West and the United Way of Peel, and has proven the viability and success of community mediation; and

"Whereas the city of Mississauga and the town of Caledon have endorsed the Peel Community Mediation Service, and law enforcement bodies refer many cases to the Peel Community Mediation Service as an alternative to a court dispute; and

"Whereas court facilities and court time are both scarce and expensive, the cost of community mediation is very small and the extra expense incurred for lack of community mediation in Peel region would be much greater than the small annual cost of funding community mediation;

"Be it therefore resolved that the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of the Attorney General, support and fund the ongoing service delivery of the Peel Community Mediation Service through Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services."

I support this petition and I'm pleased to affix my signature and to once again ask page Or to carry it for me.

LANDFILL

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): This is with regard to the Carp landfill site in west Ottawa.

"Whereas there is currently a proposal to more than double the size of the Carp landfill in west Ottawa; and

"Whereas this site has been in operation for ... 30 years and had been expected to close in 2010; and

"Whereas the surrounding community has grown rapidly for the past 10 years and is continuing to grow in the immediate area; and

"Whereas other options to an expanded landfill have yet to be considered; and

"Whereas the municipal councillors representing this area—Eli El-Chantiry ... and Peggy Feltmate—and the MPP, Norm Sterling, all oppose this expansion;

"We, the undersigned, support our local representatives and petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure the Minister of the Environment does not approve the expansion of the Carp landfill and instead to find other waste management alternatives."

I have signed that because I agree with it.

TUITION

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I have a petition from hundreds of people, and it reads, "To Stop Tuition Fee Hikes and Improve Access and Quality In Post-Secondary Education...."

"Whereas the Ontario Liberal government cancelled the tuition fee freeze after only two years and approved fee increases of up to 36% over the next four years; and

"Whereas tuition fees in Ontario have increased by more than four times the rate of inflation over the past 15 years; and

"Whereas a majority of Ontarians oppose tuition fee increases and support greater public funding for colleges and universities; and

"Whereas improvements to student financial assistance are undermined by fee increases; and

"Whereas the Ontario government's recent increase to student loan limits is set to push student debt to approximately \$28,000 for a four-year program; and

"Whereas per student investment in Ontario still lags significantly behind the vast majority of jurisdictions in North America;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, support the Canadian Federation of Students' call to stop tuition fee hikes and petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"—reduce tuition fees to 2004 levels for all students in Ontario and implement an immediate tuition fee freeze;

"—increase public funding for post-secondary education to promote access and quality;

"—expand access to financial aid in Ontario, especially for part-time students; and

"—double the number of upfront, need-based grants for Ontario students."

I support this petition and I will sign it.

1530

FAIR ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS

Mr. Bas Balkissoon (Scarborough–Rouge River): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the McGuinty government is committed to establishing measures that will break down barriers for Ontario newcomers; and

“Whereas these measures will ensure that the 34 regulatory professions in Ontario have admissions and application practices that are fair, clear and open; and

“Whereas these measures will include the establishment of a fairness commissioner and an access centre for internationally trained individuals; and

“Whereas, through providing a fair and equitable system, newcomers will be able to apply their global experience, which will not only be beneficial to their long-term career goals but also to the Ontario economy as a whole;

“We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

“That all members of the House support the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006, Bill 124, and work to ensure its prompt passage in the Ontario Legislature.”

I support this petition, and I will sign it and have page Shannon deliver it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ELECTORAL SYSTEM REFERENDUM ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR LE RÉFÉRENDUM RELATIF AU SYSTÈME ÉLECTORAL

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 16, 2006, on the motion for second reading of Bill 155, An Act to provide for a referendum on Ontario's electoral system / Projet de loi 155, Loi prévoyant un référendum sur le système électoral de l'Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I believe I'm just wrapping up from where I left off when time ran out on me last week. In closing, what I want to say about this particular bill is that it might be premature to judge whether it's going to propose this system or that system, or whether we agree with this method of selecting elected representatives or that method of selecting representatives. This is a bill not about the outcome. This is a bill that says, “This is how we're going to go about doing something we haven't done before,” which is, for the first time in many, many years, looking at how we choose our elected representatives.

Like many of the members here, I have very strong opinions, as an elected representative who's had his

hands on the system and who I hope understands some of its strengths and weaknesses, on what some proposals will or won't do and what some of their strengths and some of their drawbacks are. But I think this bill is a fair opportunity to put the debate out there and to say to people, “Bring out your best ideas. Lay them all out. Give them to the citizens' panel,” and let us see non-judgmentally what they come up with. If it's a good idea, maybe it's something we should adopt. If they decide that what we've got is what many of us here feel is one of the best systems for choosing elected representatives in the world, and they choose to say, “Let well enough alone,” many of us here would support that. But I think at this point we've left it in the hands of the citizens' assembly. I'm looking forward to their recommendations and to debating them in the House when we've actually seen those recommendations.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I'm here this afternoon primarily out of respect for the work our member for Lanark–Carleton, Norm Sterling, has put into this issue, and for his long service here and his broad understanding of the issues before us with respect to, I would say, the whole discussion on democratic renewal.

Everyone here would encourage and really strongly endorse stronger participation by all the citizens of Ontario. Indeed, the recent municipal election is good evidence that some of them suffer a shocking lack of turnout—the public participation rate. Then you look at demographic questions. The youth: We want to encourage the youth to carry their responsibilities and indeed their rights forward and encourage them to be engaged both in elected office and in participating in elections within their schools. I know some of the schools in my area will be having discussions on this topic.

Mr. Sterling brings a great deal of experience as a lawyer as well as an engineer, and as a long-time-service member here in the Legislature, he knows much of what he speaks. But I'm concerned about a couple of issues which have been repeatedly brought up, and I'm not sure—I think the government, Mrs. Bountrogianni, didn't even take their entire hour for leadoff. I'm anxious to see if Mr. Sterling takes the hour. If he does, I probably won't be here. But the issue I find the most difficult is that the results of the referendum—here's the deal, here's the trick to it all: If the recommendations are 60% approved—so the threshold has become the issue, that 60%-plus, when normally in democratic discussions, decisions are made on 50%-plus-one type of rules.

So I'm interested in the debate. We all should be interested in the debate. I don't think there's any magic answer here, but certainly democracy is something that our soldiers have fought for. At least the politicians could be prepared to listen to make sure that we get this system right. I'm looking forward to Mr. Sterling's comments this afternoon.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): I wonder whether the member from Mississauga West would like to comment on a similar point made by the member from

Durham, that the select committee on electoral reform submitted in November 2005 a report that recommended that the government set the threshold for a referendum at at least 50% plus one in 50% of the ridings, which seemed to me like a very reasonable conclusion that all three political parties came to and submitted to the government.

The other point we make is that, thanks to the current voting system, most majority governments in Canada gain power without winning a majority of votes. We had McGuinty Liberals win with 46.6% of the votes in 2003. The Harris government won 45% of the votes in 1995 and 1999. It would seem to me that a simple majority should be the norm, or at least what we accept, yet the government, by fiat, just a little while ago—"the referendum is binding if the recommended electoral system is selected in,

"(a) at least 60% of all the valid referendum ballots cast; and

"(b) more than 50% of the valid referendum ballots cast in" 60% of the ridings, which means at least 64 electoral districts.

I think that raising the threshold in the way that your government is doing makes it very difficult to arrive at the kind of conclusion—or at least to arrive at changes that so many, I think, are looking for. If that is true, why have you opted for this double super-majority threshold, where there aren't that many precedents for such a high threshold in provincial or federal referendums or plebiscites? If a simple majority was applied in referendums and the Charlottetown accord and Newfoundland joining Confederation, including the separation of Quebec, why wouldn't it be okay in this case? You might want to comment on that.

Ms. Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): This is very exciting and very historic legislation. It is high time we took a good, hard look at the way we elect our representatives. The current system, in my opinion, was designed for a two-party system.

I live in the riding of London North Centre. We have got a federal by-election going on now where there are four strong contenders. I tell you, what's happening is that people are thinking about how to vote strategically. They're thinking about who they should vote for, not based on who they want to see elected but who they don't want to see elected. That kind of system I just don't think works in the multi-party system we currently have.

So I welcome this legislation. I think it's tremendously exciting. I think all members of this House should be proud that they are taking part in what is historic. I do say that it is essential that any changes to what is the true foundation of democracy in Ontario receive strong support from the public. I am fully supportive of the thresholds outlined in this bill, because I think that only by setting up a relatively high threshold will we have public buy-in, will we settle the issue for a long time—not once and for all, but for a long time.

While I think there's real support for the notion that we take a look at our voting system, I also do think that

the public will pay attention. If the citizens' assembly comes up with a proposal that is good and solid and fair, the public will rise to the challenge and endorse it.

I'm very proud to be part of a government that put this kind of change as a priority, and we'll certainly be supporting it.

1540

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to take part in the debate today. I have no problem, as an elected member, looking at legislation or looking into new or innovative ideas and how we might have some type of electoral reform. But I can tell you that in this House and in the province of Ontario, I believe we've had a very stable political system since the beginning of Confederation. The citizens of Ontario get an opportunity—I guess now it will be every four years with the changes in legislation that allows the set times for elections. The stability we've seen in the system is something that I don't really want to gamble with.

There's also an opportunity here to create a system which may cause some chaos down the road to a province that I believe has been run very well since the beginning of Confederation. Yes, we have had different parties over the years. The previous member talked about the current system being set for a two-party system; however, in the last 15 years in this House we've had three majority governments: the Progressive Conservative Party, the New Democratic Party and now the Liberal Party of Ontario. The people of Ontario had the opportunity to vote for that. They voted for change in each of those cases. We ended up with a government that in some cases did a good job and was re-elected, and at other times they were tossed out.

I'm afraid that although we look at this legislation and think these wonderful things are going to happen, we do risk the stability that we have in the system.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Mississauga West, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Delaney: I want to thank my colleague from Simcoe North. I personally echo many of his statements, but this isn't, at this stage, what we think about the outcome. This is a question now of the process.

The member for Durham asked about the lack of a turnout. He said, "Do you get better results if more people vote?" In the 1995 Quebec referendum, some 95% of people voted. We were glad of the result, but wouldn't you have been a little bit more comfortable with a super-majority threshold before you lost your country?

It is said in software, which is where I came from, that decisions are made by people who show up. If you show up and you cast your vote and you exercise your franchise in an election, this is about you. If you don't cast your vote, there isn't much in the way of a democratic measure that we could conceive of that's going to make a great deal of difference to you.

My colleagues from Trinity-Spadina and, to an extent, London North Centre talked about the benefits or perceived drawbacks of the first-past-the-post system. By way of commentary, I'll say this about the first-past-the-

post system: One should never lose track of its most breathtaking benefit, which is its ability to defeat incumbents and, in so doing, provide the renewal and the change that all Legislatures need from time to time. In the debate about what should or shouldn't be, we should be very careful not to institute a system that constitutes nothing but statism and the preservation of the status quo.

In commenting on the degree to which it should be passed by 50% plus one or a super-majority, again I point out to you that the first Quebec referendum was won by the no side with that super-majority of 60-40. Would you like to lose your democratic traditions or your country on the basis of less than 1% of the popular vote? I think not.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): For those people who are watching the debate today, we are debating the Electoral System Referendum Act, 2006. This act follows on Bill 62, which appointed a citizens' assembly to look into various ways of electing MPPs.

As you know, in the past, everyone in this assembly—all 103 of us—has been elected by a system known as first past the post, a system where the candidate who gets the most votes on election day, be that 51% of the vote or be it 45% of the vote, as long as that particular candidate has the largest number of votes, wins the day. The question comes, should the candidate have more than 50% of the votes, and what happens to the fact that more people voted against the candidate rather than for the candidate? That brings the debate here.

Now, this bill does essentially three things. It sets up the mechanism for the referendum by setting a threshold of 60% plus one. Plus, the fact that 50%—a little bit more than 50%: 64 of 107 ridings, which we will be having in 2007—must vote 60% in favour of this particular proposal that will be put forward.

The next most important part of it, and I will be talking about this later, is, what will the question be on the ballot? There will be a recommendation by this citizens' assembly as to what that question should be, or close to what that question should be. In this legislation, it clearly says that it won't be the Legislative Assembly that will be debating and voting on what that question for this very important referendum will be; it will be the 25 or 30 individuals who are in the cabinet of Ontario who will decide what that question will be. I know the member for Beaches-Woodbine, Mr. Prue, made reference to this last Thursday, that at the very least it should be confirmed in this Legislature what that question should be.

I'm going to make a few comments about the penchant for this government to move to democratic reform without proper consultation with this legislative chamber. This isn't the first time that they have undertaken that kind of approach, and I think that is dead wrong. I think that in order for democratic renewal or reform to go forward, there has to be some degree of consensus, not only from one political party, but there has to be some degree of consensus by all political parties that now represent the public of Ontario.

The last part that is important in this act is the question of funding the people who will be interested in this referendum, the yes and the no sides. We found through our experience, those of us who have read and who have talked to people who have been involved in the referendum in British Columbia, that one of the greatest failings of the referendum in British Columbia was the fact that there was very little debate, there was very little discussion, there was very little interest and there was very little funding for education of the yes and the no sides in the BC debate.

I want to go back to the origins of where this started. It started during the last election. Over three years ago, the election document of the Liberal Party talked about strengthening democracy, and it talked about the problem with the way we were electing our people, and it quoted Jeffrey Simpson about the fact that some of the election results get skewed with regard to the first-past-the-post system. The Liberal Party said this in their campaign document:

"The only way to reverse this trend is through engaging citizens in an open, honest debate about our democracy. After consulting with the public, we will hold a referendum on whether we should keep our winner-take-all voting system or replace it with another. Alternatives to our voting system could include some form of proportional representation, preferential ballots, or mixed systems. What matters most is that you will choose the electoral system that best represents our democratic values and diverse society."

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It's obvious from the statement that was made in the campaign document and everything that has followed, including the set-up of the citizens' assembly, that this government fully expects the citizens' assembly to come forward with a brand new way of electing members in the Legislature. There is zero chance, there is no chance that the citizens' assembly will come forward and say, "Keep the present system which has been working in the province of Ontario for over 130 years." So it's a bit of a set-up. And quite frankly, if I were a member of the citizens' committee, I would not invest a huge amount of my time—I believe it's 26 weekends or something like that, fairly intense time, a great learning process—and come out at the end and say, "No, I think what we've got is perfect." It's going to be pretty hard for any of those 103 representatives, sitting around, to come to that conclusion.

By the by, I do say that I'm not certain that the 103 citizens are wholly representative of the average citizens in this province. Yes, they were randomly chosen from across the province of Ontario. The province's chief electoral officer sent out 120,000 notices and said, "Who's interested in entering into this process?" Twelve thousand responded. It was cut down to 15 per riding for the 103 choices, and then there was some kind of a lottery process, a selection process, done after that. I'm not sure that people who would be interested in this kind of process—and I think Ian Urquhart made this point in

one of this columns—who are so interested in the mechanics of the process, really represent the public at large. I don't think that the public at large are very much interested in how this place functions, other than they want it to be productive, they want the debate to be good, and they want good legislation to result from that.

I might add as well, if you turn over two more pages in this wonderful document, Government that Works for You, that the Liberal Party said, "We will give your elected representative more power.

"Your MPP should be free to represent your views, not just parrot the views of his or her party. We will make sure all non-cabinet MPPs are free to criticize and vote against government legislation, with the exception of explicit campaign promises and confidence matters." The Liberal Party, the governing party, has had, I believe, probably approaching 1,000 votes now in the last three years, when you consider first, second and third reading on many bills. And there has only been one occasion where the government has said to three members from Brampton, "You can vote contrary to the government bill." That's how this government believes in true democratic reform.

The other part of it is, as we have progressed and gone through some of the legislation presented here in the House, there has not been a willingness on the part of the government to really consult with the opposition vis-à-vis any of the legislation. I would have thought that the minister responsible for democratic renewal and reform, with regard to the citizens' assembly and this piece of legislation, would have come with an open hand to the opposition parties and said, "Here's the kind of legislation that I am contemplating. Do you have any kinds of feelings about it prior to introduction?" To me, that would have shown that there was a real concern and a real generosity on the part of the majority government. They have 70-plus members who can vote in anything on any day. Given what I just said, every vote is whipped on that side, save and except the one out of a thousand votes that they've had so far. I would have thought that if there was a true, genuine desire to drive change and to get all Ontarians on side, including the opposition benches, there would have been some generosity in that regard.

This particular bill, for instance, Bill 155—we had advance notice that it was coming down the pipe. I had my staff phone the minister's office and say to them, "Could you provide us with a briefing prior to the introduction?" because to be very responsible in responding to this kind of legislation, you should not go off half-cocked and say you're going this way or that way until you've had the opportunity to read it and understand it. Of course, there was no generosity on the part of the minister to do that at that time.

I also note that on Bill 62, the bill with regard to setting up the citizens' assembly, we were here in second reading—most members don't know this, because they weren't in the Legislative Assembly when this happened. The bill came up for debate one evening at 6:45. As members of the public might not know, we adjourn here

at 6 o'clock and return at 6:45. Well, sometimes members, in trying to get a bite to eat in 45 minutes and make a couple of phone calls, don't make it back here right at 6:45. Because I was involved with Bill 62, as our critic for democratic renewal, I was almost on time, not right on time. I came in the back door and I was a little concerned because I was having a bite to eat with some of my colleagues who were on duty that night and they weren't coming down, so I thought I'd better skittle in here. As I walked in the back door here, I heard the Minister of Natural Resources get up on Bill 62, a bill for democratic reform, and try to cut off second and third reading debate without notice, without any further debate, and pass the whole thing lickety split on unanimous consent. That's because it happened at 6:45 that evening, and there was no New Democrat party member here to object, and I was the only one who was walking in the back door, and I yelled "No" from behind the benches. That is so indicative of this government's notion that democratic reform is not the public, it's not the Legislature that's involved, it's the Liberal Party of Ontario that knows all and wants to push their particular perspective of this whole thing.

Their handling of this issue, their handling of democratic reform in general, in my view, is very much lacking. As previous governments, we've known that when we're appointing officers of the Legislature—the Ombudsman, the privacy commissioner, the information commissioner, the auditor, the Clerk, those kinds of people—there is a great desire to get all-party consent for those appointments. There's a resolution in front of the Legislature in order to have the support of all parties with regard to that.

I believe that kind of attitude, those calls that the Premier should make to the leaders of the opposition, is also necessary when we're going through democratic reform. This should not be a partisan political issue. Yes, members will have different views on different parts of democratic reform, but it should not be a partisan political issue, which the Liberals seem intent on making it. Their disgraceful behaviour—the Minister of Natural Resources on Bill 62—points very, very much to their lack of regard for this place.

I guess another part of their lack of regard for what members or former members of this Legislature might think about how members should be elected—and quite frankly, those of us who have been elected to this place have some interesting perspectives with regard to how the system could or could not be changed. I believe it was only through, in large part, my badgering of the government that they finally succumbed and put forward a select committee to look at electoral reform. This included all three parties, and we came down with what was in most part a unanimous report which had 10 recommendations.

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One of those recommendations was to appoint three people who were former MPPs, not present MPPs, as ex officio members of the citizens' assembly. What we had

envisaged on the select committee was that these three former MPPs—one to be appointed by each party so there wouldn't be a lot of foofaraw as to how it was going to be done and all the rest of it—would provide a resource for the citizens' assembly committee to ask the important questions: How will this work once these people are elected to the institution? What will it mean in terms of balance of power? Will there be a better Parliament as a result of that? So that was one of a number of recommendations which the government has not followed in this particular legislation.

My feeling, and the feeling of Mr. Miller who was my cohort on this whole report—Mr. Miller and myself were representatives of the Progressive Conservative Party and we put forward a dissenting report to the select committee because we didn't agree with all of it. In fact, both Mr. Miller and I had some disagreement with regard to some of the other points that were recommendations, but the principal ones that we disagreed with related to this, and I'll read our overall attitude towards this, and I want to talk a little bit about this:

"We agree with the majority of the report—that is, electoral reform (as opposed to parliamentary reform) is unlikely to solve the problems facing our parliamentary system.

"In spite of this, we continue down a path which will be difficult if not impossible to reverse. We risk making a system badly in need of reform worse.

"With the present lack of trust by the public in their politicians, the temptation to seek change will be overwhelming. It will be difficult if not impossible for an objective assessment of the current system to be carried out due to the cynicism and distrust that has arisen towards politicians and the political process."

That distrust and cynicism have grown with this government of broken promises. Dalton McGuinty, in my view, has done more to damage the institution of Parliament than any other Premier who has ever served this province. That's a pretty tough statement to make, but I believe that with regard to the difference between what he promised in the election and what he is doing in this Legislative Assembly. That has encouraged a growth in this cynicism and distrust of the public.

"We believe it would be a mistake to assume that cynicism and distrust have as their principal cause a concern by the population about how their elected representatives are elected. We believe the cynicism and distrust have a lot more to do with what elected representatives actually do once elected and to some extent how well or how poorly the institution to which they are elected actually functions, as opposed to the method of election."

I believe that this institution of Parliament is badly in need of reform, and the basic reform that we need here is a ceding of power from the Premier and the executive council to this legislative chamber, primarily a ceding of power from the Premier of this province to the Legislative Assembly. In my view, the Premier of the province has been essentially put in the position of having almost

dictatorial powers in our parliamentary system, and that really is unfortunate. It's not only unfortunate for the present Parliament, it's unfortunate for future Parliaments, and we must address it at some point in time.

The focus of the Parliament is not on debate. Question period, quite frankly, is a joke. It's theatre only. It is not related to accountability and asking the Premier or his cabinet questions and giving responses, which the public are entitled to. It's theatre. It's, "Keep the pat line going forward, say anything, but don't answer the question." Consequently, what do you expect from the public but cynicism and distrust as a result of that?

The chief problem that we have in this place is the overwhelming power of the Premier's office and his staff. It will take a very strong leader to cede that power, to give up some of that power to the Legislature, to the committees of the Legislature, and to change dramatically how this place works. I believe it's possible and I believe that's what we should do first before embarking on a new system of electing our MPPs as we go forward.

There is no doubt in my mind that one of the models that will be put forward by the citizens' assembly will be some form of proportional representation. I know other members have said that's not part of the debate, but I think it is part of the debate. I think once you cross the line into a proportional representation system, you're effectively saying we are going to have coalition or minority Parliaments forever into the future, and I don't think that will be the question on the ballot, unless there is a very strong sense by the public as to what the vote is about.

I think we should talk about what these various systems produce. They produce minority governments. If you have 46% of the vote, as Dalton McGuinty had in the last election, he would not get a majority government; he would get 46% of the seats. That's the ultimate goal of a proportional system. In a mixed member proportional system, as we found out in visiting Germany and Scotland, which have that kind of a system, there's a great deal of angst. There's a great deal of competition between those members who are elected in the constituencies and those members who are elected on lists. The members who are voted in in the constituencies have to continually deal with those members who were elected on the list contradicting what they may be doing for their constituency, coming into their constituency and electioneering when in fact they don't have the same kind of responsibilities as a constituency representative. When you get into a mixed member proportional system, you have two kinds of MPPs: You have those who are accountable to their constituents and others who really don't have the burden of taking care of a constituency and representing a particular geographic area.

I guess the other part of proportional representation, which was explained to me about two or three weeks ago by a delegation that was here from South Africa, one of the provinces in South Africa—and their system was totally proportional—was that the party owned them. The party owns MPPs who would be elected from a list,

because the only way they can get elected is that the party puts down a list with number 1, number 2, number 3, number 4, number 5, number 6, number 7 etc. Should they step out of line with the party, in this South African province anyway, what happens is they ain't on the list next year or the next election.

1610

Our parties now, I would say, have some control—not a huge amount of control. I believe very much that the party system, is inherent in the culture of our political dynamics in the province of Ontario and in Canada and is necessary and leads to, in my view, compromises in policies and does away with extremes in legislation and in going forward in terms of planning our province. So I'm very much in favour of that.

Mixed member proportional systems will also mean an increase, probably a substantial increase, in the number of MPPs in the Legislature of Ontario. It would be pretty hard, I think, to increase the size of the constituencies we already represent. We represent now about 100,000 people, and I think it would be very difficult to represent many more people than that. So if you have people who are chosen off lists, even if it was 25% of the House, you would be increasing the number of people in this place by 25 or 30 different MPPs. I think that people should know that when they vote or if they vote in a referendum on that particular issue.

I want to talk a little bit about the bill in terms of the lack of provision of funding for the yes and the no sides. I believe that the yes side will be very, very well represented should a mixed member proportional system or any kind of proportional representation idea float out. That is because it's in the interests of minority parties like the Green Party, the Family Coalition Party, the people who are in the anti-abortion party, the pro-choice party, the Lanark landowners party, all those kinds of people who represent what I would view as a smaller point of view in the province of Ontario. They will all be involved in the debate and say, "Yes, we want this." Their support may be wide, particularly in the case of the Green Party, which would have the most support in the province of Ontario, but it's rather thin across the whole province.

Our Legislatures and Parliaments have worked on the basis of compromise. We don't like all the legislation that is there, and I believe that we should be going even further in terms of our democratic processes to try to have more consensus-type legislation in this place. I believe it's possible, providing this place is restructured to allow the opposition more power in committees and that there is in fact more freedom on the part of backbenchers in the governing party to participate in debate and put forward constructive amendments to existing legislation.

But I do not believe that it's in the interests of the public of Ontario to have the balance of power—because we will be having one major party which will have to rely on a number of minor parties, and they will spring up if we go to the proportional representation system. I

do not believe that the government of Ontario should have to rely on people who are more interested in what I would term an extreme view rather than a holistic view of what government should or should not be in the province of Ontario. So I think that's the road we're going to head down.

With regard to some of those views and what happened in British Columbia, I think it's really instructive for members of the Legislature to read some of the Hansard which was involved and was taken when we were dealing with the select committee on this particular subject, on electoral reform.

I want to first of all talk about proportional representation, because that was a big topic. I believe this Bill 155 is going out to committee, and what we're going to see are groups that feel they're not represented in the Legislature to a large enough extent. That includes the minority kinds of parties that often have a more singular focus than an overall holistic focus of governing. It also includes people like Fair Vote Canada, I think it's called, where a group of women believe there are not enough women in this Legislature and by changing the voting system they will improve that, although we didn't find that on the select committee when we went to Scotland and talked to various people. That's more a function of what the parties would do.

I think one of the most instructive witnesses was Harry Neufeld. Harry Neufeld is the chief electoral officer of British Columbia. Mr. Neufeld came to the committee because we in the committee thought we would have him come and talk about the referendum that they had out there. You may recall that the citizens' assembly in British Columbia recommended a system called STV. It's a transferable vote. A single transferable vote is what STV stands for. It was interesting, Mr. Neufeld taking us through the referendum which occurred in 2005, I believe. What Mr. Neufeld said—and I believe him, because I think it's probably true here in Ontario—was that very few people in British Columbia were interested in this. They didn't care. They had no interest in changing the electoral system. It wasn't on their agenda.

As you know, I have been here a long time—probably too long, some people think—but I have never had anybody walk into my office and say, "We should elect you guys differently. We think the election system is unfair." Nobody has ever come in and said that. That's because I don't think people are engaged in this very much.

Part of his testimony related to the number of calls he was getting as the chief electoral officer for British Columbia on the referendum that was in place at that point in time. He was asked by—because we were all concerned about whether the public were actually engaged in the question of the referendum. Nobody could understand what the STV system was about, because it requires a fair bit of study, but in fact the public was going to vote on this. Mr. Neufeld said about their political education system that it was "highly ineffective."

For instance, "Having a website which has got a semi-academic discussion doesn't work. Yes, the academics will go and highly motivated citizens will read through it, but it's opaque to most people. At our 1-800 call centre ... I was answering questions at the same time that they were answering questions"—those people answering questions about the referendum—"and I was getting 5,000 calls a day, while they were getting 50" calls a day.

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People were interested in the election. At that time, you remember, the New Democratic Party was in power. They lost that election in 2005 to the Liberals, and they had the referendum in place.

What happened also in British Columbia was that no politicians took a stance on whether to vote yes or no in the debate because the politicians who were trying to get elected themselves saw no merit in putting themselves in the corner of one camp or the other camp. There were no marks for them, whether the person was going to mark—they got two ballots. When they mark "Norm Sterling," why should "Norm Sterling" take a position on this ballot if it was going to influence them if they were going to choose "Norm Sterling" on that ballot?

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): The third person.

Mr. Sterling: That's a third person.

At any rate, the politicians never took a position on it. The other part of it is, as I have had pointed out to me by Scott Reid, who is the deputy House leader for the federal Conservatives and has been involved in the democratic reform area for some time: What politician in this place is going to stand up and say, "No, keep the present system"? How will I stand up and say, "I won eight times under the present system; don't change it"? Anyone who stands up for re-election in this place—and I imagine in most places the sitting member will be running—no one will be standing up and saying, "Vote no on the referendum." No politician will put himself on that because it's like feathering your own bed. The position is probably not tenable. So the choice they made in British Columbia was not to take a position at all.

Mr. Speaker, in British Columbia, as you know, they had a threshold of 60%. It's interesting to note that what happened was that almost 58% voted for the referendum. But you know that what will happen is that if the electorate—which I predict they will be—are really, really mad at the government, they will pick up the second ballot and they will say, "Okay, I'm going to vote 'em out and I'm going to vote for a new system because these guys are really bad." That's what happened in British Columbia. If they want to get out and they want to vote against the government, the chances of the democratic reform referendum going through will be high, because most people were not interested in it, are not interested in it and will mix their two votes together in terms of what they're doing there that day at the polling booth.

Even though the report said that we should have this coincident with the provincial election, I would rather

have it separate and apart from the election and have it saying that if not more than 40% of the people come out to vote, then the referendum won't be any good—or 35% of the vote or whatever. Mr. Neufeld suggested that in British Columbia, for instance, if it had been a stand-alone referendum, they wouldn't have gotten 25% of the vote out, because the people were just not interested.

So this debate about this bill is likely to engender different views, of course, with regard to what should or shouldn't be done. But my feeling on Bill 155 is that it lacks in a lot of ways. I don't know whether the threshold, or the people who are actually voting, are going to vote on the issue or are going to vote on the present government as to whether they want them or don't want them. They will vote for a change, with the view that that will show the government that they're really against them. Therefore, they're not really thinking about the complicated issues that ensue as a result of their vote.

With that, I don't have a lot more to say, other than that it's unfortunate the government hasn't tried to co-opt, in a lot of ways, the opposition with regard to all of their comments with regard to democratic reform. I really believe that this place could be much improved to gain the respect and the trust of the people of Ontario. That would require tremendously strong leadership, which I don't think the present Premier has exhibited. I do believe that John Tory has that strength of leadership and that when Mr. Tory becomes the Premier in 2007 we will see real parliamentary reform, giving more power to committees, changing the roles of some committees. I'd like to see the estimates committee virtually done away with and something replace it where members would actually have a say as to what the benchmarks for Parliament shall be in the future. I'd like to see the Board of Internal Economy not controlled by government ministers as it presently is, and it would have equal representation by all parties, as we know it in the federal House. I'd like to see question period cut down to 45 minutes and the Speaker given much more discretion on allowing questions from the back bench of the government side as to whether or not they are real questions or more properly taken care of in ministerial statements. I think our question period, quite frankly, has deteriorated terribly during this Parliament. I'd like to see a number of committees have equal representation by all parties so that the government would not have a clear majority on committees, so that amendments would have to be considered in a responsible way by both the opposition and the governing party.

I believe that there is lots and lots of opportunity to improve this place. But again, first and foremost, it requires from the Premier of the day the willingness to give up some of the power, open that iron fist and allow the Legislature to come into its own.

So I think this exercise is somewhat academic in that the threshold has been set at 60%. I don't think that threshold will be reached in the next election, regardless of the recommendations of the citizens' assembly. Therefore, unfortunately, we're spending a lot of time on a

matter which is not going to come to fruition and involving a lot of people in a bit of a wild goose chase, I might say. I would prefer much more to get on with real parliamentary reform so that the people will start to regain the trust that they have lost, particularly during this government.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?
1630

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale-High Park): I look forward to speaking at some length in a few minutes about this bill. But I have to say specifically that Bill 155 is really not about democracy—it's actually anti-democratic—and it's not about reform because it's not going to reform anything, and we all know that as we're speaking about it.

It really issues from cynicism and fear. It's a cynicism about the electorate and about the electoral process and also about its own committee and the citizens' assembly. It generates, of course, the kind of cynicism in the electorate that it speaks from. It also speaks from fear. It's a fear of a governing party, the governing party that has benefited from the system more than any other governing party. Here we have, on the federal level, the Liberal Party, where about 30,000 votes creates one Liberal seat, while it takes about 130,000 Progressive Conservative votes to produce one seat. Clearly, here's a party that benefits nationally from the first-past-the-post system that we have right now.

Of course, it benefits provincially as well, where we have 46.6% voting for what is a much greater majority government. Of course, were proportional representation brought in, both the Progressive Conservatives and the New Democrats would benefit, as would the Greens, who have half a million voters and not one seat. So one has to question the democracy of that, even though, obviously, I'm not a member of the Green Party.

I look forward to speaking about this bill at some length, about its inadequacies, about the history that led up to it, and really just the common sense notion that any five-year-old to 55-year-old would know that a majority is 50 plus one. It's not 60%; it's 50 plus one.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to speaking more.

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I'm really pleased to join this debate in the House on second reading of Bill 155. I can't believe I'm actually listening to what I'm hearing tonight, so I wanted to speak to the bill because I hear a lot of different arguments that don't even relate to what I thought we were discussing here.

I wanted to remind people that 1792 was when we elected our first Parliament. Some people think the way we vote in Ontario has stood the test of time. I guess we're going to find out. I have a lot of faith in a citizens' assembly. We heard earlier today an erroneous number that was brought forward about how many electors were sent letters. My understanding is that 124,000 Ontarians were asked if they would like to participate and, of that number, 12,000 said they wanted to. Twelve thousand people decided to give up all their time and to show that

they believed in democracy and that they were prepared to volunteer their weekends for months and to go across this province and ask people what they feel about this piece of legislation.

I think the referendum question will be clear. I think there is some nervousness about that in this House, but it's clearly going to be concise and impartial. We don't want any confusion. We want people to understand that the threshold is important. This is something that is going to be a foundational change. It's going to be something that deserves to have the support of the majority of Ontarians. There's nothing more important than having a say in your democracy and the people who lead you. It's time for us to have that conversation with Ontarians and ask them their opinion.

This past month, my youngest son got to vote for the first time. He is the last of three boys who got to vote. I can assure you that it was a big day, to go in and fill your ballot in for the first time. I believe that voting is fundamental democracy. It's always been encouraged in my house, and discussing those issues. I hope there isn't a feeling in this House that we're going to discourage that conversation.

I think democracy is one of those things that we—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Questions and comments.

Mr. O'Toole: I'm pleased to respond to the member from Lanark-Carleton. The only comment that I'd ask him to reply to specifically in his response is the STV. The Harry Neufeld report or comments, with respect to what Mr. Sterling said—I listened to several documentaries on the issue, and no one actually understood the question, including academics. So it was a very ambivalent outcome of a very complex process.

If you look at the Quebec referendum, it was the clarity bill that came after that, because they fudged the question to provoke a certain type of response. So there's a lot of caution required here and certainly a lot of education.

More recently, at a local level, at the municipal level, one of the concerns I heard—I had no role in the municipal election but I have a great deal of interest, because I'm a citizen in the broadest sense. I really encourage people to participate by at least voting. I take time to read the pamphlets and to listen, because it's non-partisan, which is good, and I'd encourage municipalities, except the city of Toronto, of course; David Miller and all—but that being said, the biggest complaint I had was the mail-in ballot, the high rejection rate and the number of missed ballots, those persons who didn't get a ballot, or those who did, and a very complex procedure for persons who have for years voted a certain way. I, for one, don't approve of that. I would like to put on the record that that's a more current and immediate debate that could be dealt with without the politics involved.

What's most disappointing here is that McGuinty and his party could actually do something to enforce democracy. One thing would be just to keep their election promises. That would be simple enough. Respect the role

of individual MPPs. There's more to be done, but this bill won't do any of it.

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): I'm pleased to get the chance to respond to the member from Lanark-Carleton. The member spoke a lot about many different issues. He started talking about government conduct in the House, how they can force bills without any discussion. I want to remind the member that they had the chance for eight years to govern Ontario and to have a lot of committees and a lot of discussion in the House. I'm wondering why he didn't come forward and change that atmosphere. Of course, he's a veteran in this place. He has a lot of experience. He was a minister of the crown in many different governments. Why didn't he make the changes back then when he had the power?

Interjection.

Mr. Ramal: I want to just make my comment and focus on his speech. I'm not going to go over the different members who have spoken on this issue.

It's very clear that this bill is not favouring one side against another side. It has opened the debate across the province of Ontario for many people to choose. This will be an asset in the election. Our Premier, our party, promised the people of Ontario to open it up. Hopefully, the people of Ontario will choose the same system we have. If they decide, with a majority, to change it, that's fine. This is a democratic process. As has been mentioned by my colleague, this system has not been touched for a long, long time. It's about time to open it up for discussion, to eliminate all the concerns brought by many different parties, like the Green Party, the NDP, the many people in favour of that system. But I certainly believe that we have a great system, and hopefully the people of Ontario will maintain what we have.

I want to go back to the member from Lanark-Carleton and tell him that this bill is about opening the debate, not about favouring one against the others. That's why I think it's part of the democratic process, and hopefully, all the people of Ontario will participate and show their interest.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Lanark-Carleton, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Sterling: I think the crux of the point—incidentally, we did change the process. We brought forward changes in the standing orders to allow ministers to put bills out after first reading. I'd say it's a technique that I wish more ministers would use on your side to get better debate. Whenever bills have been put out, they have engendered a lot more consensus-building in terms of the process. I brought forward a change in terms of introducing committee bills, where in fact committees can bring legislation forward to this place. Members haven't taken advantage of that, unfortunately. Part of the problem that we faced as a Conservative government was the strident opposition, the Liberals being the principal party that did not want to co-operate and make this place run better. They forced time allocation time after time on simple, straightforward pieces of legislation which in some cases they voted for in the end.

As I said in my speech, reform not only has to come from a willingness on the part of the government; it has to come from a willingness of all members of the Legislature, all parties, to understand that this place isn't working and that we have to do something together to make it work. I believe that I now have a leader, John Tory, who is willing to put that up even further than Mike Harris and Ernie Eves did. I have not seen one amendment to the way our parliamentary system institution here works by this government that is making this place work in any way better than it has before.

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The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. DiNovo: I look forward to starting up where I left off, but I wanted to start with a quote. This is from the committee on electoral reform, and this was their conclusion.

"Arguments for a super-majority (i.e., anything more than 50% plus one) tend largely to be about whether or not changing the electoral system is too important to be undertaken with the barest of margins. The committee heard of no other instance (other than in British Columbia) of an electoral reform referendum with a super-majority (i.e., not in Scotland, Wales, Italy, Ireland etc.), and although most of the advice the committee received was for a simple majority (50% plus one), there were dissenting opinions." Clearly we're getting one in this bill. "At the same time, the committee was unhappy contemplating a situation such as that in BC where there is a 'grey zone' where the result is fairly conclusive," that is, almost 58% in BC, "but is not binding. Other possible conditions were discussed, such as requiring support in specific regions, or in rural versus urban ridings, or setting a threshold for voter turnout that would have to be crossed in order to validate the result."

Finally, in dark print, they say, "The committee recommends that the referendum be binding upon a vote of 50% plus one, and the support of 50% plus one in at least two-thirds ... of the ridings, or any other formula that ensures the result has support from northern, rural, and urban areas of the province."

So I quote from there.

I'd also like to share a quote from Fair Vote. They say, "No government raises the bar for its own legislation, which often has far-reaching effect on the lives of Canadians. No politician has ever refused to accept a seat in Parliament or a provincial Legislature due to failure to win 60% of the votes—many gladly take their seats despite winning less than 50% or even less than 40% of the votes in their ridings. In fact, thanks to the current voting system, most 'majority' governments in Canada gain power without winning a majority of votes."

Of course, we know this is true of the McGuinty Liberals, who won just over 46% of the vote; we know this is true of the Harris Conservatives, who won 45% of the vote. So according to Bill 155, neither of those votes should be considered legitimate.

What I also said in my two-minute hit was that this bill comes out of a sense of cynicism about the electorate,

that the electorate can make the right decision, which is really a cynicism about the democratic process itself; and it comes out of fear of a party that has benefited disproportionately from our current system.

Also, I wanted to mention that nine MPPs unanimously recommended this threshold, and that's the 50% plus one; six of them are Liberals and two are now in cabinet: Wayne Arthurs from Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge; Caroline Di Cocco from Sarnia–Lambton; Kuldeep Kular from Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale; Norman Miller, PC, from Parry Sound–Muskoka; Richard Patten, going back to the Liberals, Ottawa Centre; and of course our own Michael Prue from Beaches–East York; but then to Monique Smith, another Liberal here, from Nipissing; Norm Sterling, PC, Lanark–Carleton—we've heard from Mr. Sterling; and Kathleen Wynne, Liberal, Don Valley–West. So we're not alone in the New Democratic Party in being concerned about this threshold.

The other problem with this threshold is that it denies—and we haven't heard this from any of the speakers today—a voice to not only the majority, 50% plus one, in any logical democracy, but it also denies a voice to aboriginals, to women, to people of colour. It's a very interesting circumstance that in places like Wales and Scotland, where they have at least in part a proportional representative system, women's representation in those governments went, in Wales, from 15% to 20% right up to 52% upon bringing that system in, and in Scotland from 10% right up to 48%. I wonder at a government and their fear of proportional representation, which is clearly what the citizens' assembly is moving toward and has been pre-empted by this bill, in a sense.

Another point: We're asking 103 citizens to spend 26 weeks—and you heard Mr. Sterling speak about that. To what end, I would ask? To what end when the foregone conclusion is that the threshold is going to be 60% and that, even if they decide they want to bring in 50% plus one, this is going to be denied to them? It seems to me a great waste of time.

The cynicism also that is so important to address here is that cynicism that I know every single member in this House has met at the door in campaigning and canvassing. It's a cynicism that says, "My vote doesn't make any difference. It doesn't matter who I vote for; that's not going to change the system." We've all heard this. We all combat it in our own ways. Yet here is a classic bill that builds upon that very cynicism—proportional representation—where they would have a say. Again, I speak about the Green Party, a classic example: half a million votes across the country and not one seat. Half a million voters disenfranchised—half a million—not to mention the other more splinter parties and not to mention the two parties that sit here before you: the Progressive Conservatives and the New Democratic Party, who would gain from some version of proportional representation.

I do agree, you know, that there are some advantages to our first-past-the-post system. There is that sense of riding representation, that we're closer to the people, that they know and they vote on a personality basis, in some

cases, for somebody who's going to represent their riding best. But we'll never even see a slight change. We'll never see a little bit of this and a little bit of that, as our friends in Scotland, for example, have in their electoral system, with this Bill 155 and this margin of 60%. We saw what happened with that in the British Columbia experiment. We saw how callously the vast majority of the voters were denied their rightful say and due process, where almost 58% of the voters were turned down.

There's the historical piece of logic that tells us that throughout our history in Canada we've gone on 50% plus one: 50% plus one brought to the people of Newfoundland into Confederation. Had they set it at 60%, we wouldn't have the Canada we know today. It was mentioned that World War I and World War II in conscription—50% plus one spoke to that issue. And 50% plus one spoke municipally to the fluoride issue. In Toronto, we wouldn't have fluoride in our water. The 50% plus one, I pointed out already, is—if you asked the majority of Canadians, which is what we are talking about here, "What does the majority of Canadians want?" most of them would say, "Yes, a majority is 50% plus one."

I pointed out the huge discrepancy, the huge problem, in our current system and the fact that it takes far fewer Liberals to elect a seat in this country than it does to elect, for example, a Conservative seat: 30,000 to 130,000 in a federal election. That's also represented here in this provincial government, where just over 46% voted Liberal, and yet we have far more than that represented in terms of seats; 34.6% voted for the Progressive Conservatives—again, far less seats there; and 14.7% voted for the New Democratic Party, again far less than are represented in the number of seats.

So it's very clear where the fear is. I said this bill comes out of a sense of cynicism and a sense of fear. The fear is that if we let this system go, what might happen to the representation of the Liberal Party in government, both provincially, and then maybe, if it catches on, even federally. Who knows? This is a problem. It's a problem of democracy and it's a problem in terms of what's going to happen once this bill goes through

1650

There are other problems with this bill, of course, as well. One of them is found in subsection 3(1). Again, this is a problem with this bill's sense of what is democratic and what is not. I quote from the subsection: "The referendum question, in both English and French, shall be established by an order of the Lieutenant Governor in Council."

Surely, this is contrary to what the all-party committee recommended. Mr. Prue spoke to this, and hoped that the members of the Legislature understood how serious this first provision is. It runs contrary to what was said by the all-party committee in recommendation 6, which read, "Responsibility for the referendum question(s)—including the wording and number of questions to be asked, and the number of referendums to be held—rest ultimately with the Legislature, acting on the advice of the citizens'

assembly, the select committee on electoral reform, and if required, Elections Ontario.” That’s from their own committee’s recommendation.

What will this mean? It will mean—I’m quoting from Mr. Prue’s comments now—that “there will be no debate in this House if the bill is passed. There will be no debate. Whatever the question that is put by the government at the time of the referendum, that will be the question. Will it be neutral? How do I know? Will it be fair or just? Will it purport to do one side versus the other?” Who knows. “There will be no debate on this. It will be decided by the minister and her friends in cabinet.” In and of itself, that’s hardly a democratic process.

He goes on to say, “The second issue: All of the lofty goals that were unanimous at the all-party committee have been ignored. Everything is now going to be done by regulation, by the government and by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. There will be no debate”—a serious problem with Bill 155.

Now I want to get into the solutions, because for those who are actually watching at home and interested—this bill speaks to that cynicism too, it really does, because if this bill is passed, nothing will change. If the referendum is held, if it manages to get past all of this, nothing will change. If the citizens’ assembly sits and decides they want 50% plus one, they’re not going to get it. No wonder the viewers of channel 70 at home are tuning in to Dr. Phil or Oprah instead of listening to what is going on in the House. Again, they’re feeling that selfsame cynicism, the cynicism that says, “Nothing will change.”

The New Democratic Party has some proposals for democratic renewal, and I want to spend my remaining minutes talking about what would go into democratic renewal if we were really serious about it, if we really wanted to see it. And remember, another part of this bill that we haven’t spoken about very much deals with donations.

First of all, a ban on corporate and union donations: The public power platform called for a ban on corporate and union donations. In 1999—let’s talk about that for a minute—the last election year for which there is data, corporations gave \$13,060,198 and unions contributed \$1,226,876. Money from corporations made up 40% of all contributions flowing to the three main political parties and candidates in Ontario between 1995 and 2000. This ban would mirror successful reforms in Quebec, Manitoba and federally.

Number two, a recommendation around public campaign—

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The government likes to sit [*inaudible*]. So I don’t believe there is a quorum.

The Deputy Speaker: Is a quorum present?

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. DiNovo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A little bit of excitement in the House.

I wanted to continue to speak about what would be involved in true democratic renewal, and why our public is cynical and why this bill breeds cynicism and comes from cynicism, as well as fear of losing power, of course, for our friends opposite.

The second point I wanted to make was about public campaign financing. Our current system of political tax credits and party audit subsidies means that the public is already subsidizing political parties to the tune of some \$12-million-odd, and almost 10% of that goes directly to corporations for donation write-offs. Again, this breeds cynicism and the person we meet at the door during campaign time who says, “Why should I vote? What difference does it make?”

The third recommendation: Bring back enumeration. A 2003 study by McGill University’s Jerome Black evaluating Canada’s registration methods concluded that the “permanent list approach” has contributed to diminishing voter turnout and has accentuated existing participation gaps across social groups. Elections Canada’s chief electoral officer, Jean-Pierre Kingsley, estimated that at least 500,000, and possibly 1.5 million, Canadians had to register at the polls in the 2004 federal election. That would help.

Finally, and I’ve already talked about this, of course, proportional representation: “The Ontario NDP has called for the implementation of proportional representation for some time. The report of the proportional representation committee will be a key part of our convention strategy,” and we’ll be bringing that forward.

I said a few of the reasons why proportional representation is so important because, contrary to what this bill does with its high threshold, proportional representation actually represents, proportionately, those who are out in our voting public and what their desires are. So we wouldn’t have the situation with proportional representation that we have now where half a million voters across Canada who want to vote for the Green Party have no say whatsoever, where other parties have no say whatsoever and where only the Liberal Party seems consistently, over and over again, to benefit from the first-past-the-post system.

We heard from some of our members, and I just wanted to comment a little bit about what we’ve heard today so far as well. Mr. Delaney used this quote: “This system is the best in the world.” He also said, “This system has breathtaking benefits,” and then goes on. And I’ve heard again from members opposite that there are no foregone conclusions. Well, these would seem foregone conclusions. If we have the best system in the world already, if we’re participating in breathtaking benefits from the first-past-the-post system, then why go through this exercise? Why have debate here? Why bring in this bill at all? Why have a citizens’ assembly? Why have this committee that the government struck? What was the

point? Is this just to waste taxpayers' dollars? Is this just to chew up airtime? If we have the best possible system, why in the world are we going through this exercise in the first place?

We should certainly tell our citizens' assembly—lord knows, we don't want them to come up with their own ideas. We should tell them, "Save your weekends; save those 26 weekends that you'd otherwise spend"—all 103 of them taking their time to come, for what reason?—when we already have the best system in the world, when this system gives us "breathtaking benefits." My goodness—

Mr. Murdoch: Where is he?

Ms. DiNovo: Mr. Delaney, who unfortunately isn't here to hear this—

The Deputy Speaker: I remind the member that we do not speak about the absence of other colleagues. Thank you.

Ms. DiNovo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I won't. I will go on to speak about the fact that by the Liberals' own threshold, which is 60%—we now hear that 60% constitutes a majority according to this bill, not 50% plus one. As I said at the outset, if you asked any five-year-old, any 10-year-old, any 55-year-old on the street, "What is a majority?" they would say 50% plus one, but no, we have a new definition here. The majority is 60%. Perhaps one should point to the fact that the majority of political parties in this country, by well over that 60% margin, are due to benefit from a system that's more proportional. So if they buy their own rhetoric and their own logic that 60% is this important threshold, then we have two out of three parties right here—two thirds, 66.6% of the political parties in this very House—that would like to see Bill 155 not only go to committee but, quite frankly, go under major revisions at that selfsame committee.

1700

I will just conclude with that, and say that even by their own threshold—which, again, they plucked out of the ether—this bill doesn't hold, this bill is not democratic, and it will not lead to reform. It definitely should go to committee, and let's hope that at committee it gets torn apart to the point that our poor citizens in that citizens' assembly actually have their democratic say.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Hon. Mr. Watson: I don't know how New Democrats sleep at night, because they're so negative all of the time—all negativity all of the time. What you just heard was such nonsense coming from a new member of this assembly. It was complete hyperbole. And talk about cynicism. We had 12,000 people—

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Watson: Mr. Speaker, I didn't heckle the member when she was speaking, and I ask for the same courtesy.

We had 12,000 people apply to sit on the citizens' assembly, and through that last 15 minutes of drabble the honourable member just dismissed those 12,000 people who wanted to make a better province. I want to thank

the members from my riding: Carl Berger, who is the representative from Ottawa West-Nepean, and our student representative, Shannan Harrington, a student from St Pius X High School, who I had the chance of meeting last week thanks to a reception Dr. Bountrogianni put on for all of the student reps. These two individuals don't share that sense of negativity that the New Democrats have. They're looking forward to contributing to the citizens' assembly because they believe this is a golden opportunity for us to listen to individuals in our community about how we can better improve the democratic system in our province.

I would encourage members in my community in Ottawa on January 11 to attend the University of Ottawa, room 140 of the New Residence, de 7 h à 10 h pour les francophones—c'est le 11 janvier à l'Université d'Ottawa—and on January 16, from 7 to 10 p.m. The place is still to be determined. It will be advertised, and it will be a bilingual session. I encourage people to come out and be positive about this process, because it's about our future and our province.

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby-Ajax): I appreciate the opportunity to comment briefly with respect to Bill 155, the purpose of which is to provide for the mechanisms of a referendum on electoral reform in the event that the citizens' assembly recommends a change in how our MPPs are elected.

Specifically with respect to the comments made by the member from Parkdale-High Park, I agree with her completely that it is really important that we address the cynicism of voters, the people we meet at the door who say to us, "Why should we even vote? Why should we bother? What kind of difference is it going to make? Do I really have a say in this whole process?" It's really critical in terms of restoring confidence in politics and politicians that we do something concrete in order to change that, and although this bill may go some way in terms of dealing with that, my submission would be that with respect to the issue of electoral reform, it's not going to be satisfactory and it's not going to do anything significant unless it's also accompanied by parliamentary reform. In my view, that's going to do a lot more to deal with the level of cynicism that we see in voters and make them feel that they can trust in the system again and that there is a reason for them to become involved.

Some of the things that we could take a look at doing, and these were mentioned by my colleague the member from Lanark-Carleton: improving the decorum in the House, particularly during question period, I would say; keeping campaign promises—doing what you say you're going to do and not turning your back on your promises after you're elected would go a long way in terms of dealing with the situation; respecting the role of individual MPPs as well in allowing MPPs to vote on important issues as they see fit, based on what their constituents are telling them, not what they're being told by someone else; and finally, improving the flow of information to the public so that they receive all of the information they need in order to make informed decisions.

That, I would submit, is the way we need to go, not just with this one piece on electoral reform. We need to consider the whole picture.

Mr. Marchese: Speaker, I have to tell you, I agree 100% with my colleague from Parkdale–High Park—101%. I was struck by how negatively received she was by the Minister of Health Promotion and other Liberals as I looked around. I just don't quite understand it. It's not as if the member from Parkdale–High Park said, "Look, we object to the fact that you put together 103 individuals across the province chosen at random." She didn't object to the fact that you chose them equally between men and women; not a problemo. She also says you're okay with using 26 weeks in terms of having the citizens' committee go out and debate. She didn't fight that.

Hon. Mr. Watson: Attacking the people.

Mr. Marchese: What she fought is the following—and let me tell you clearly, Minister of Health Promotion. What she said is that when she hears a number of Liberal members—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Marchese: Speaker, you've got to shut them down a little bit.

When she hears a number of Liberal members saying, "This is the best system in the world," she then begins to wonder, are they really for reform? How can this be the best system in the world with you at the same time saying, "But it could be improved"? When Liberal members speak, they don't say, "The system needs improvement or reform"; they say, "This is the best system in the world." So she, quite appropriately, says, "I don't know."

Then she says, "Why would you establish the following rule that says you need at least 60% of all the valid referendum ballots cast in order to have a binding referendum, and that you need more than 50% of the valid referendum ballots cast in 60% of the ridings?" If you really want change and reform, why don't you just simply adopt the 50%-plus-one model? Why would you undermine your intended purpose, which is to say, "We want the citizens over here that we selected to come up with a different model, whatever that may be"? Why not make it simpler, instead of creating a threshold that is difficult to achieve? That's what the member was saying. It's very clear to me.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): When we talk about voter cynicism, let's talk about member cynicism. I really have to say that I'm absolutely taken aback by the member from Parkdale–High Park. I had the opportunity last weekend to talk to one of the young minds that is coming forward as part of the students looking at the democratic system. What I heard was enthusiasm. What I heard was a willingness to come in and learn—really appreciative of the opportunity to come forward and talk about what she wants to see in an electoral system. When I hear members like that talk about the cynicism, is it any wonder that the voters feel that way? When one has the

opportunity and the honour and the privilege to sit in this House today and talk about what the people want for the province of Ontario, one should always be receptive to change. I find it—

Laughter.

Mrs. Mitchell: You may find it funny from across the House, but it isn't funny. We have a system where fewer and fewer voters are coming out in every election. We are looking at what the people of Ontario want—a citizens' jury, a students' jury—and what we get is laughter from the third party when we talk about electoral reform. They stand up and say, "Well, if it was our way, we'd be in favour of it, but if it's not our way, then we don't want any part of it." I say to you across the House, specifically the third party and specifically the member from Parkdale–High Park, I would encourage you to take the time and talk to the people and listen to what they want. Don't be so cynical.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Parkdale–High Park, you have two minutes to respond.

Ms. DiNovo: It's exactly because we absolutely support democracy and absolutely support the citizens' assembly that we would like to hear them come to their own conclusions and not be fed the conclusion of the 60% threshold. Methinks thou doth protest too much. I mean, listen to this reaction. Why the reaction? So negative and so cynical about this poor citizens' assembly that hasn't even met yet. They've already decided for them. This citizens' assembly, after this bill, if this bill is passed, won't be able to decide 50% plus one. They can't decide that; this government has taken that decision away from them. And do you know what and why?

Interjections.

Ms. DiNovo: I appeal to the Liberals at home, the women at home, people of colour at home, the aboriginal members who are watching this at home, to listen to how a woman is shouted down again in the House. Again, a woman is shouted down in the House. It's becoming commonplace around here. Why is that? One reason is because we don't have 50%-plus-one proportional representation. If we did, we might have more women in the House—52% in Wales, 48% in Scotland—we might have more people of colour represented here instead of the same old, same old response on the other side.

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You know what? What we're looking for is, first of all, a chance to speak without being interrupted. Second of all, we're actually looking for democracy from a party that gains from a system that is clearly showing its age. This is a demonstration of exactly that.

I hope the citizens' assembly is listening. I hope they're listening to this diatribe.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr. Ramal: I guess many people on different sides of the House are getting excited about this bill, about the importance of this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the chance to speak in support of Bill 155, the referendum act. It seems the debate is shifting a little bit. We are not debating in

this House today which side we have to take; we're debating about reform, about this act that will allow the people of Ontario to engage in the debate, to choose which system we want in the future. That's why we randomly selected a citizens' assembly from many different people in Ontario, in order to choose a system and to administer this act.

In 2007, during election time, the people of Ontario are going to choose which system they want. If the NDP or the Conservatives or the Liberal Party want to choose a certain system that can influence the people of Ontario, that's fine. That's part of the democratic process. That's why we're opening the system up.

I was listening to the member from Parkdale–High Park. She's pretending or assuming that all the people in this House are against a certain system. No, as a matter of fact, not. We're debating a different issue. We're debating the process that we can allow the people of Ontario to use in the election of 2007.

Many people in Ontario, many people of this province, are concerned about certain issues. We know that over the years, the people who cast a ballot, who participate in the election system, are getting fewer, year after year. That's why the idea came to engage the people of Ontario to participate in elections, to give the people of Ontario the chance to choose the system they want, in order to encourage them to vote and select the party and the government they want.

I listened to the member from Lanark–Carleton talk about democracy and the democratic process in this House. As you know, the member has been in this House for more than 25 years, more than anybody else. He's a veteran. He had the chance to be a minister many different times and he didn't change the system. He talked about the democratic process in the committee. We saw in the past how many bills came to this House that didn't go to committee, that were passed by time allocation, and finish the story. There was no debate. Talking about question period time, he's critical of question period time. I wonder why, in the past, he didn't change the system.

That's why we're open to debate, whether it's proportional representation or maintaining the current system. Whatever the people of Ontario choose in 2007 we're going to honour and respect.

When my colleague the member from Mississauga West is talking, of course he represents his own view. He doesn't represent the whole caucus of the Liberal Party. He, as a person, as a member of the caucus, as a member of this Legislature, is allowed also to present his view, and many others don't agree with him. So that's why we opened the debate not just among the NDP or the Conservatives or the Liberal Party, but among all the people of Ontario.

Last week I was listening to the member for Halton when he was talking about how people from outside this place cannot decide or determine the way that elections are going to be designed in the future. But a committee from both sides of the House—Conservative, NDP and

Liberal—travelled the world and examined many different systems. They came back and proposed to the government how they're supposed to establish a citizens' assembly. They advertised it and chose a big number from across the province of Ontario. Those members, I guess, came in goodwill to participate in the system, and they've worked very hard to establish and design a process.

I want to tell the member from the NDP and the member from the Conservatives that we're not choosing one system; we are debating the mechanism, the mentality which is going to govern our next election. So it's very important to allow all the people of Ontario to participate in a very important and very crucial issue to all. We all have to encourage and increase participation in elections.

I think it's a very good democratic exercise, and I don't want to mislead the public when we talk about this issue. We're not taking one side. As the government of Ontario, we're not telling people to vote in a certain way or bringing this bill forward just for show. No, it's not for show. We're not fooling anyone, because we promised before we got elected in 2003 to bring this issue forward, to open it for debate. That's what we're doing now in 2006. We're opening it for debate to engage people. That's a part of the process, that's a part of the democracy in which we believe on this side of the House.

I hope that many people in 2007 participate in the debate and come and choose the system they want. And if the NDP are right, if they think it is crucial to them to choose proportional representation and the people of Ontario support them, I'm willing to accept and respect that because of the democratic process, because it went through the democratic way. I'm willing, as a person in this House, to respect it and honour it and go through with it.

We're privileged in this province; we're privileged in this nation. We're debating about the way we vote, how we elect our people. Many different parts of the globe don't have that chance. They don't have a chance to have elections. We hear in many different countries that they have a dictatorship, that they have a government imposed on them by force or by the power of certain religions or ethnic groups or the power of a certain colour. But in this province of Ontario we are privileged and honoured to have a democratic process. We're debating a way to encourage people to have more participation in elections. We have to be happy about this; we have to feel privileged and talk about this opportunity which is being given to the province of Ontario.

After listening to many different speakers in this House, I think we are in a healthy debate in which every party, every group and every member has a different view and is trying to influence their constituents or their people, which is part of the democratic process too.

Hopefully all of the members elected to this House will continue to hold seminars and hold sessions in many different places in the community, in universities and colleges, to talk to the youth. The youth, as statistics and

studies show, participate in elections the least because they think that it doesn't matter what happens, that their voice is not going to get to the government. That's why not many youth are involved in the elections. So a part of the citizens' assembly is to engage students, engage youth. This is a very important step that tells them, "Whatever you choose today, whatever you select today is going to govern your life, is going to direct your life in the future. So you, as a youth, have the future. It's your time. It's your choice. If you participate, you can select the government, you can select the party, you can select the ideology which suits your future and which will paint your future."

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It's important, as I mentioned many different times, for all the members to participate, not just let it go, talking in debate: I'm with you, I'm against you. We have to eliminate the cynicism because people outside want to listen to us, listen to the parliamentary channel, and see some other members. They have doubt about what we're doing. They ask why we are debating this issue, why we are wasting our time. As a matter of fact, it's not wasting time. Nobody forced our government to bring it forward. As we heard the Conservatives, they're happy with the current system, the NDP is not happy with the current system, and the Liberal Party, some are for, some are against. I guess it's a healthy situation.

It's important for all of us to engage in that debate. I want to tell the member for Parkdale-High Park, when she was talking about this issue, we're not afraid of anyone, we're not afraid of anything. That's why we're bringing it forward. We're engaging the NDP, the Conservatives. We're sitting at the same table, asking people to come forward and participate with us—give us the ideas, give us the best possible system we can govern ourselves by in the future. We're always looking for modernization in this place. Modern life has to be progress, has to be change to adapt to and include all the changes going on around us.

I think this is a very important bill. I want to commend the minister and the government for promising and delivering on the promises. Hopefully all the members understand this position and vote with it and have good faith in the minister, in the government, in the future and changing the system which governs us, which allows us to go to election year after year. Thank you again, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to speak.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mrs. Elliott: I'd like to say at the outset that there are several things the member for London-Fanshawe said—I was listening very intently to his comments—that I specifically agree with, and one is that we're very fortunate to be living in a democracy when so many people in the world live under dictatorships and don't have the ability to have free elections such as we have here, such as the municipal election that we just had, where we, in my riding of Whitby-Ajax, elected a new mayor, Ms. Pat Perkins, and we're pleased to be able to work with her as time goes on.

But the other thing I would like to comment on is the fact of having students involved in the citizens' assembly, as student members. I too think that's very important. I always look forward to receiving invitations from local schools, to go and visit grade 5 students and grade 10 students who are studying civics, because I think it's really important for them to have an opportunity to discuss issues involving democracy and our electoral system, our parliamentary system, so that as they get older and they reach the age when they are able to vote, they're knowledgeable about it, they feel they're part of the system and that there is something to be gained by their engaging not just in voting but also becoming involved in the political process either by working on a campaign or commenting on it, writing about it, something of that nature.

However, what I am concerned about is whether this particular bill is going to advance the cause of electoral reform and engage citizens in becoming more involved in the political process and getting them to be more confident about the process and making sure that it does represent them.

There are several things here. The threshold is extremely high. It's going to be hard for them, even if there is a willingness to make those changes, to reach that target level. Also, there is some concern that if people do vote in favour of a referendum, is it going to be because they truly want electoral reform or because they want a change in government.

So there are some concerns there with respect to the bill that I think need to be dealt with, but of course we all share the same goal in making sure that we hear from the citizens of Ontario and what they truly want in representation from their elected members.

Mr. Marchese: I've got to tell you, I'm worried about the intellectual integrity of the Liberal government, I really am. I'm not just worried about the member for London-Fanshawe; the entire caucus that's here worries me. They present a very paradoxical problem which they cannot see, from what I am able to gather from the argument they present.

Here is the problem, as I see it: The member for London-Fanshawe says we're debating reform. Yes, he's right. We are going to give the citizens' assembly a chance to choose the system they want. He's quite right, that's what we're all here for. He says the committee the government established a while ago, in 2005, worked hard to establish a process. That's, indeed, true. The paradoxical problem I have got with the way the member is presenting this argument is the following. The select committee on electoral reform submitted in November 2005 a report that recommended that the government set the threshold for a referendum at 50% plus one in 50% of the ridings. That's what that hard-working committee recommended by way of a process. You, your government, your Premier, changed that process.

We are for reform and we're not instructing them what to decide, because they will do that on their own. We have no problem with that. You have changed the rules

and you have made the threshold a little bit complicated by requiring that the referendum is binding if the recommended electoral system is selected in (a) at least 60% of all the valid referendum ballots cast, and (b) more than 50% of the valid referendum ballots cast in 60% of the ridings.

Do you understand, member from London–Fanshawe, that your government has changed the rules to make reform a little more difficult? Do you understand that? That's why I worry about the intellectual integrity of the Liberal government.

Mrs. Jeffrey: I just want to thank the member from London–Fanshawe for his balanced approach to this bill. We've heard some really wild arguments tonight about voices being denied and fear of proportional representation and cynicism and a waste of time. I read the select committee's dissenting opinion. What I read, when I read the report, was that there was questioning of a lack of objectivity of citizens and people who didn't like the order that things were going to be addressed in.

It sounds like there's very little trust in Ontarians to engage in this deliberate exercise in, ultimately, the decision of electoral reform. Our party has enormous faith and respect for those members of the citizens' assembly who have dedicated their weekends and their time. If they recommend an alternative and this matter goes to a referendum, we trust and we respect the decision that Ontarians will make about the future of our electoral reform.

The citizens' assembly has made important strides in empowering and engaging Ontarians in our democracy, and especially students. We heard that earlier tonight. They have a meaningful voice in shaping our democracy. I trust the people of Ontario to approach this historic task thoughtfully and deliberately. I know that they're going to have a strong, vital choice in this democracy in the future.

Democracy is the thing we're asked to cherish and pay for and sometimes even to die to defend. Perhaps ordinary citizens should occasionally be allowed the opportunity to think about it and to deliberate on it. This is a very important issue. It's historic. And I trust that the citizens of Ontario are wise enough to see their way through all the drivel that they've heard tonight, the fear-mongering and the scaremongering that they're heard. They're going to have an opportunity to make a good decision. They'll be educated and they'll have time. We've given a year for this debate to occur. We haven't done it in a rush. We trust that citizens across Ontario will make the best decision possible.

Mr. O'Toole: I'm anxious to respond to the member from London–Fanshawe because I think he did raise a couple of issues. First of all, probably the most important thing is—

Mr. Marchese: The problemo.

Mr. O'Toole: Well, problemo—the integrity of his response. Quite honestly, if you look at the substantive public issue on this matter, it's the threshold issue. That's the standard they set. That's the standard that they should

be publicly defending, and it's indefensible. The member for Parkdale–High Park I thought made a very impassioned plea for doing the right thing. If you're going to do it, like you said—this is what is suspicious here. It's another Liberal promise. They promised during the election and now they've brought something in that's not doable.

I'm privileged because in the next few minutes I may get a chance to speak, and I've been waiting. I'm on the list to speak on this bill.

Mr. Marchese: You're next, aren't you?

Mr. O'Toole: I'm hoping I will be.

It's in that vein, that the member from London–Fanshawe didn't even use his 20 minutes, like the minister when she spoke. She didn't use even half of her time, and her parliamentary assistant didn't. So this raises great concern about their passion for the project ahead of us on Bill 155. They could start—fundamentally and quite simply, to improve democracy is to put out a platform and the promises and the commitments that you intend to keep. It's that simple. The cynicism in the public today is based on the type of governance we've seen federally from the Liberal Party. Now we're seeing it provincially in the Liberal Party. You can't actually believe a thing they say. Is that a parliamentary comment? I don't know. But it's in that term.

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I listened to the member from Whitby–Ajax, who is new here, who practised law and deliberates on these things. She is a great spokesperson on Bill 107, human rights issues, she brings voice and experience to these things, and that's what's important—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. The member for London–Fanshawe, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Ramal: I want to thank the member from Whitby–Ajax and the members from Trinity–Spadina, Brampton Centre and Durham for speaking and commenting on the bill.

I want to start with the member from Whitby–Ajax. She was talking about how people will get upset with the government and will vote against or with the bill, that it depends on how they love or they hate the government. That's not going to be the issue. Also, I agree with the member from Durham. Yes, it's not fair. We are 71 members here and you are 24. You get equal time for debate. It's not good; it's not fair. That's why I spoke 10 minutes and I didn't speak for 20 minutes. So it's very important. And I hope the member from the NDP caucus agrees with me. He's a great advocate of proportional representation. We didn't get proportional representation in terms of timing. I'd like to speak on this issue. It's a very important issue for all of us.

But at least on this side of the House we didn't have a decision before we went to the ballot on whether we supported this side or were against this side. We opened it up for debate. We opened it up for the people of Ontario, and the people of Ontario will decide and will determine in October 2007 whether they like the proportional representation or they don't, whether they like this

current system or they don't. That's why we opened it up. We're not afraid. If the majority of the people, as has been mentioned, wants a change, let's go for change. That's why we believe in democracy, the only government for so many different years to practise democracy in the House. We allow all the bills to go through debate and go to committee and listen to stakeholders before we pass any bills.

I'm proud to be a part of the government. I'm proud to have a leader like Dalton McGuinty, who believes in engaging all the caucus members on every issue and engaging the people of Ontario in any details and on such an important issue as is today before us, democratic reform, engaging the people of Ontario on electoral reform. It's very important. This issue is crucial to all of us, because if this bill goes forward, it's going to decide the fate in a democratic way for the government of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Further debate.

Mr. O'Toole: It's a privilege to have the opportunity to speak, to be a parliamentarian. The French translation is "to speak." That's the intention this afternoon.

I'd like to go to the basics and the fundamentals of this particular bill. There has been much deliberation. The member from Lanark-Carleton is our esteemed senator here and has participated in this debate for over 20 years. Many of his comments are worth reading. I'd encourage people to listen up, because he does pay attention to this issue, the nuances of governance.

But how you would start this debate, and it's something that has been said in politics, is that all politics is local. I believe it was the House leader in the federal House in the States, Tip O'Neill, who said, "All politics is local." I believe that's true, and so if you really want to start the debate here, you'd have to look at—we just came through a municipal election, and in my area, the people spoke. In fact, they spoke loudly and long. The percentage of participation was, I think, a remarkably high number: 40%, or around that participation.

I see the Chair has changed. Nice to see Mr. Hoy in the chair; he does a great job.

I would say that if you look at it from the point of view of most members here, in one way or another they began their public life, if you will, locally. The member from Whitby-Ajax: There's no better person than she, serving her community in a number of capacities on the children's treatment centre and other public engagements. She saw the necessity and the personal responsibility not just for her family but for her community, for her province, for her country. I think all members who are here do have a passion to serve the public.

What becomes the problem is that politicians are given to saying things they don't mean, or saying yes at the door to something that's asked of them: "Yes, I'll do that." That's where the integrity starts to erode, the confidence in the political process, the public service process.

That being said, each of us here should pay close attention to this debate. The broader discussion is on

democratic renewal, and while I could speak at length on Bill 155, I'm going to start, sort of off topic a bit, where all politics—I served, first of all, on a parent council and in other areas of the community as well, because we had five children and they were all involved in school and sports, so you participated in those things. People ask you to be chair of a committee or to be the secretary, and all these things are as a volunteer. I've been on the library board. In fact, I was on a regional library board. These are unpaid positions, but they're areas where I'm making a contribution as a citizen—no particular expertise essentially, but you do learn a lot from the process. Over time, I was a school trustee and served as a director on a provincial body.

I'm not going through it in a personal sense to ingratiate any experience I've had since 1982, but to say that this principle of "All politics is local,"—we bring that experience with us. Quite frankly, where I see it in most trouble is at the municipal level. At the municipal level, by and large, there's a very poor voter turnout. I think it's difficult for members who are seeking election or re-election to office to get their message out, because people's wishes, desires and hopes change as society itself changes, but the process you end up with is that you get the government you deserve. "Deserve" means that if nobody votes, you get perhaps some elected members who aren't properly endorsed.

For the record—and I want to put this on the record because I have some time to do it—first of all, I respect all persons in the past municipal election of November 13, of all ideological persuasions. I congratulate them for putting their name forward. Some of them obviously weren't successful. Some were incumbents who were elected by acclamation; that is, no one challenged them. Some were challenged and re-elected. Some were challenged and defeated, and there were new persons elected. So there's a renewal process going on.

Those subtleties, over time, change slightly the direction of a municipal government, a regional government. Indeed, provincial governments have been challenged over the last decade and a half, since I've been paying close attention, by having three different parties—well, three and a half different parties technically, because you had the coalition of the NDP and the Liberal government. Then you had the Liberal government. Mr. Hoy, you were a member of that government as well. Then you had the NDP government, and they got caught with a serious recession and couldn't complete some of their stakeholders' wishes and hopes. Then you got the Harris government and the Eves government, and now you have another Liberal government.

I would say locally—and this is what I want to get to when I have the time, in the very limited time I'm given to speak on this. I've had the privilege, as I said, Mr. Speaker—they've changed. Mr. Hoy is no longer in the chair; Mr. Crozier is now in the chair. It's a pleasure to see you back, sir.

On the record, I want to first of all recognize three mayors in the Durham region who were defeated. I want

to thank them for their service. I would start with Marcel Brunelle, who was the mayor of Whitby. I had served with Marcel. He was defeated, surprisingly, perhaps being less attentive to the general constituents' wishes, perhaps thinking his plan was perfect. I don't know what the cause was. I liked Marcel. I worked with Marcel, both in and out of government. He was replaced by, as the member from Whitby-Ajax said, Pat Perkins, who has served as a regional councillor. I served with her, actually, for some time, and I'm sure she'll bring a fresh new approach, a citizen's perspective.

It's a humbling process to represent the public, especially when you're just starting, because on the one side you have the public service, who really know what the challenges are and will offer suggestions, but at the end of the day, the publicly elected people make those decisions. The civil service, by and large, whether it's municipal or, as I've found here, provincial, deliberately does its very best to try to make those processes, choices and options work. Because really, if any ideology had it right, we'd be in paradise already, after a couple of thousand years. There is no right, perfect answer. If the economy goes soft, the Dalton McGuinty government will be in serious—and I repeat, serious—trouble, because right now almost all hospitals are in deficit, either real-time or stall-time. Their line of credit in many cases has been maxed out.

We see their issues challenging them on a number of fronts and we see the economy in the US going south, softening in the housing market and some of the fundamental sectors attached to that sector. Most economists see—in fact, David Dodge, the head of the Bank of Canada, said recently that there's going to be some softening in the economy.

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So ultimately, this debate about democratic renewal is about the integrity of keeping your promise. Don't promise something you can't deliver. I'm not trying to turn it into the "Dalton McGuinty's 200 broken promises debate." I'm trying to say that that's the difficulty. To the people listening tonight, you should recognize that when someone's wish list is longer than yours, you should perhaps question them intensely on the integrity of their promises.

Gerri Lynn O'Connor, who was the mayor of Uxbridge for many, many years and served, I think, almost 30 years in municipal government, chose not to run. She was actually replaced by Bob Shepherd, who's the new incoming mayor-elect in Uxbridge, and I look forward to working with all of the council there as well.

Another mayor who was not re-elected was John Mutton, who was the mayor of Clarington. John did serve for two terms and I think brought the municipality forward very thoughtfully and aggressively, and was certainly doing a very, very strong job in the community. Again, it's always our duty to be as objective and neutral in these issues as possible. He was replaced in the last election. John Mutton had been chair of the finance committee at the region of Durham, so he had a very

good grasp of such issues as ambulance, public health, public housing, long-term care and Durham transit. He had a lot of understanding of those issues.

I'm going to read from my list here thanking Gerri Lynn O'Connor, who has been replaced by Bob Shepherd.

The regional councillor of the area is a person who I think brings a lot to the table: Howie Herrema. His father was the chair of Durham region. He is a young fellow with a young family, and from a very strong family with lots of roots in the community.

Ward 1 is Bev Northeast. Ward 2 is Ted Eng, another strong voice of the agricultural community, former head of the Durham Region Federation of Agriculture. Ward 3 is Pat Mikuse. I'm not as familiar with her, but she was strongly re-elected. Ward 4 is Jack Ballinger, who is new. Ward 5 is Gordon Highet.

In the board of education in Durham—again, I'm only going to be speaking to the public and separate boards; there's the whole French-language panel, which is public and separate, as well. The incumbents were acclaimed, I believe, or there was no challenge. On the public board of education is Joe Allin. Kathy LeFort is on the separate board; that's the Durham Region Roman Catholic Separate School Board. Joe Allin is with the Durham region public board.

I should mention at this time that in my particular riding we also have some meaningful contact and partnership working with the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board. There we have a brand new trustee, Steve Cooke. We also have Cathy Abraham who is re-elected there, and they'll serve very well.

I just want to go on and make sure I stay with the councillors. Mayor Marilyn Pearce was re-elected in Scugog township: a strong, well-respected woman in public office who I think has given and will continue to give strongly to her community. Jim McMillen is a regional councillor; he was acclaimed. Cec Lamrock was elected, and he was elected over Larry Corrigan. I thank Larry for his service. He has done a great job, brought a fresh voice to his one term.

Bobbie Drew was, I believe, acclaimed. Lynn Philip Hodgson was acclaimed. Blair Martyn was challenged. Blair has some health concerns, but his passion is without question, without fault. Georgia Brock was re-elected or acclaimed as well. Also, in Clarington, I want to extend my congratulations to Mayor-Elect Jim Abernethy.

Quite an interesting number of changes. Again, the politics of this debate here are about starting that relationship with the elected person and the people. How do we change this format? That is really the question.

Mary Novak is a regional councillor. She had that position before and was defeated, and now she's back. Charlie Trim was re-elected as regional councillor, Gord Robinson as local councillor, Adrian Foster as local councillor. Ron Hooper is brand new. They have a well-known family business in town, and I'm sure he'll bring a great deal—he has served in almost every volunteer position in the community. The board of trade—he was business person of the year, and has given freely of his

time. Willy Woo is new as well, and he will be a local councillor, and, as I said, Cathy Abraham. In the separate school board are Maureen Day and Granville Anderson. Steve Martin is the public school trustee with the Durham public board of education.

What I'm trying to establish here, Mr. Speaker—thank you for the indulgence for putting that on the record—is that they were elected by the traditional rules of 50% plus one, and that's how it has been, for better or worse, for richer or poorer and all of these things—in some cases they'll be poorer.

I just have a couple of things that I wanted to make sure that I didn't forget. Another person who served the community well—he ran for mayor this last time in Clarington—is Jim Schell. He brought a lot to the table, is very widely respected, and I think he's an ordained Anglican minister. He was not re-elected, and I wish him and his wife, Pat, well.

Another person who chose not to run this time was Pat Pingle, who is a professional nurse and brought a lot of concerns for those issues around the table. She chose not to run again and to have a life. But for some time she served the public in many ways. As I said, the other person who ran for election and had been a regional councillor and didn't get elected as mayor was Susan Self. I served with Susan at the region of Durham in the time I was there. Susan, I commend you. She should continue to be engaged in the community, because she has a lot to offer. She will be missed there, but I know Bob Shepherd, the new mayor, will certainly work with his council, as all of us try to work here collectively.

What I'm most concerned about, to bring us back to Bill 155: Here's a bill—and we heard it from the member from London—Fanshawe. He said that this is an election promise. Yes, you could say that with this bill, they've kept their promise. But what they've done is they've built in a default system here; they've set the threshold so high it'll never complete. So how obsequious can you actually be with the public?

Mr. Marchese: Obsequious?

Mr. O'Toole: Well, actually, you've got to interject the odd inflammatory word.

That discourages me when—the whole debate here, that's their standard. Their standard is 60%. It's no longer “good enough is good enough.” It's 60%. In other words, it's designed to fail. So they can say on the one hand that they kept their promise that they'd look at democratic renewal; on the other hand, they designed a system that's designed to fail. How disheartening. How disingenuous. It really makes me stop and ask the viewers tonight and those who will read Hansard in the future to realize that governments have magical ways of avoiding doing what they said they'd do.

As I said, all politics are local, so you've got to look at—each member here tonight who has spoken or not spoken, including the minister, the parliamentary assistant, the member for London—Fanshawe and everyone who spoke hasn't even used their time, and I hardly have enough time to speak on this. I've hardly even gotten to the main point.

1750

I think the most content that I've heard is from Norm Sterling. I'll be quite frank. I know I'm using a name, but his name is well known. He brought up one substantive debate. There are two points that I want to make in the remaining brief time that I have. One point is that they had the STV, the strategic transferred vote, in BC. They failed to get the 60% threshold there. Quite frankly, Newsworld and other commenting media outlets tried to review, but no one understood the question. Now, I'm going to put to you that cabinet and, in regulation, the government will set the question. That becomes what I'd call the acid test for this whole process. The question itself, what is the question? Shall we have proportional representation? Should we have some other new form of electing or having representation from all faces and all peoples and all types of values? That's a valid question. It's a very valid question. You'd want to make sure that you allow that liberty within the democratic renewal debate and those volunteers from every riding in the province, all 103, to spend their weekends reviewing and contemplating some very, very important questions on our future.

So the STV, the strategic transferred vote process: I challenge people in their rebuttal to tell me what it means. You could have a priority ballot, a preferential ballot, which would say, “I put O'Toole first, Christine Elliott second and Bruce Crozier third” in the event that there's—your vote, my vote, their vote. If I had more numbers than someone else, then it would be a preferential ballot where you could vote for more than one person. There are all kinds of different approaches to this.

The other question, the second point in the very brief time I've got left, was the unity question in Quebec. We all know that they had to have a federal bill after that referendum. It was called the clarity bill, and that clarity bill was really about the question. So this debate is substantively about some of the purpose intentions and the draft outline in the regulations of the 60% plus the 50% of all valid ballots in the referendum in 64% of electoral districts. Another condition to qualify is: What's the question? If the question is going to be, “Should we have proportional representation or some other method?”—and even if I look at the governance model of proportional representation, what's the power of the leader of the party? There's a lot that could be said, and I'm sad to say that in the Liberals' case, neither the minister, the parliamentary assistant nor the speakers have used their time.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr. Marchese: The member from Durham makes a point about the British Columbia attempt to reform the system with a single transferable vote, and he made reference to the member from Lanark—Carleton saying that it was a very complex question to ask. I'm not quite sure about that. Some 57% of the people who voted there voted in favour of reform, so it couldn't have been that obtuse or that abstruse that people just didn't quite understand it. Clearly, they understood it. The problem there, as it is here, is the threshold; that's the problem.

The reason why they didn't get reform in British Columbia is because they established a threshold that could not be reached by the electorate, and the Ontario government is doing the same. That's the problem and the paradox that I was speaking to earlier. That's why I say I'm worried about the intellectual integrity of the Liberal government, including intellectual slippage.

I wonder whether the member could comment on the following in terms of what the government is doing. The member from London-Fanshawe says the electoral reform committee worked hard to establish a process, and they said the referendum question—not them; the government says, “The referendum question in both English and French shall be established by an order of the Lieutenant Governor in Council.” That's what the government proposed, but the committee recommended something different. They said, “Responsibility for the referendum questions, including the wording and the number of questions to be asked and the number of referendums to be held, rests ultimately with the Legislature, acting on the advice of the citizens' assembly and the select committee on electoral reform and, if required, Elections Ontario.”

So when the member for London-Fanshawe says, “We are doing what the electoral reform committee recommended,” it is not true. What I just pointed out is yet another element of the government manipulating the recommendations in a way that suits them. Maybe you might want to comment on that.

Ms. Matthews: I have only two minutes but I have so much to say, so bear with me. The first thing I'd like to do is introduce a couple of friends I have in the gallery. One happens to be my daughter, Christie Nash, who worked on electoral reform over the summer, and Cooper Van Grol from Orange county, California. Welcome. They've been here listening to the debates, and I'm glad they are.

I'm supposed to be responding to the member from Durham. I have to say I find it very curious that he criticized members for not using the full amount of time yet he spent his time reciting the results of the municipal elections. I guess any of us could fill our time if we read from election results from a past election.

The other comment I want to make is that we keep hearing about how the NDP are the ones who are so hard done by under the current system, but let's remember 1990. Some of us will remember that election in 1990. The NDP got 38% of the votes—that's good; that's good for you—and 57% of the seats. So the point is that this current system cuts every way.

Mr. Marchese: It's not working.

Ms. Matthews: It's not working. I believe it's time for a change.

There have been issues raised about the question: Will it be a biased question? The question will come directly

from the citizens' assembly. They've already illustrated what a terrific job they are doing, their commitment to the cause. They will set the question.

Finally, I want to talk about something that I think is just spectacular. The citizens' assembly is hosting a series of consultations across the province: 38 different meetings across the province, two of them in London—January 9 and January 11, I believe—where they're inviting the public to get informed, come to the meeting, understand what the—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Questions and comments?

There being no further, the member for Durham, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. O'Toole: In the limited time, I respectfully respond to the member from Trinity-Spadina, who mentioned the issue of this single transferable vote. Quite frankly, the issue there is that there was money for one side and not the other. This was one of the issues. The education process—it demonstrates how important it is to engage the public in a dialogue. I'm anxious to see whether the citizens' advisory committee that we have is at the students' level or at the citizens' level.

He pointed out one very important thing, that the question which I raised is the question. All of the technical thresholds, 60% and all these things, are indeed that—they're out there, and that's what the citizens' assembly will be told to do.

The member from London North Centre in fact was inaccurate in her comment. If you read the bill—I'm not trying to be smug with you; I know you're an intelligent person—the question is going to be decided by cabinet, by the Lieutenant Governor. They're going to issue it. The citizens' assembly will do all this hard work and it'll get massaged and come out looking like a duck instead of a horse. It's not going to be a true reflection.

I would only say in conclusion that one other remark—I'm not trying to be argumentative here, but the member from London North Centre took exception to the fact that I spent a few moments respecting the people who've served the public at the local level by reviewing the results and the participation rate in the municipal level. This is so important. This is the genesis of public service. I say that almost every person here in some capacity—Ms. Mitchell, as others—I could look around the room, and almost all have served locally. That serves as a great and important entry point and learning point, and maybe a final point for some members. But this question will remain unanswered as of tonight.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1800.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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No. 122B

N° 122B

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 20 November 2006

Lundi 20 novembre 2006

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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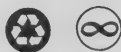
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 20 November 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 20 novembre 2006

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

REGULATORY MODERNIZATION ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR LA MODERNISATION DE LA RÉGLEMENTATION

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 14, 2006, on the motion for second reading of Bill 69, An Act to allow for information sharing about regulated organizations to improve efficiency in the administration and enforcement of regulatory legislation and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 69, Loi permettant l'échange de renseignements sur les organismes réglementés afin de rendre plus efficaces l'application et l'exécution de la législation de nature réglementaire et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): It is my understanding that, in the rotation, it is now the order for the New Democratic Party, the third party. The member for Toronto–Danforth.

Applause.

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): My thanks to Mr. Levac for his generous and gracious applause.

My caucus colleagues have already had an opportunity to speak about Bill 69 and express a number of their concerns. I can see that they certainly enthused many members on the government benches with their comments.

My comment is that, in general, the idea of information sharing makes a lot of sense—no question that when you break down silos between different departments, when you have people share information that is of concern to multiple ministries or multiple authorities, then there is some advantage to government. In fact, there will be some positive outcomes if this bill, in probably some amended form, does allow for that breakdown of silos between different departments.

There is a concern, though, that I have—and I think that concern would be shared by other members in this House—and that's the permissive language of the bill that sets the stage for generic inspectors—some people have referred to them as super-inspectors—being brought in to take the place of many different inspectors with very different disciplines. I have concerns that if you

bring in a generic inspector you will actually lose out on expertise that's needed to safely guide one through a variety of different areas.

Speaking from experience, dealing in the past with inspectors for the city of Toronto who were dealing with building code and public health concerns, certainly those people who are fully trained in health matters—epidemiology—have a clear sense of how to stop the spread of contagion, who know how to ensure that food preparation is dealt with properly, who have training over some years and then experience over some years in making sure that the health of the public is properly protected, have a very different culture and knowledge base from those who are building inspectors. The ability to ensure that concrete is poured properly, that foundations are in good shape and that code is respected in a building is something that is doable only by someone who has had full, proper and complete training and, beyond that, years of experience actually delivering on-site, and who has familiarity with exactly what is safe building practice and what isn't—a very different set of skills, mindsets and approaches from those who are dealing with public health. Similarly, someone who's doing inspections around worker health and safety will have a very different picture of what constitutes safe industrial or construction practice from a person whose training is entirely in building code or in public health.

I have real concerns that if one tries to put in place a system wherein a building inspector—or the provincial equivalent, a health and safety inspector—and an environmental inspector are all conflated into one person, you won't have the quality of inspection and of enforcement that's really needed. To go into a new environment, a new building, a new company, and ask intelligent questions that will elicit the information needed to actually ensure that the legislation the inspector is meant to carry out is carried out can't be done in four or five areas.

1850

Mr. Speaker, when you were actually not in that chair but speaking from these benches, you spoke, I thought, quite well about the need to have the ability for an inspector who sees a problem in an area to raise it with another department. So if a health and safety inspector is in a slaughterhouse, for instance, and sees a problem that has nothing to do with the health and safety of the workers but has a lot to do with the health and safety of the public, then you're entirely right that that person should have the ability to speak to other departments, raise issues and see to it that the collective good is dealt with

properly and isn't inhibited by some bureaucratic barriers.

My colleague from Nickel Belt talked about the problem she saw with the generic inspector when she talked about the potential loss of incredible skills and incredible training when we think about inspectors who work in mines. She talked specifically about people who go down into mines in Sudbury for the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines with specific and particular expertise that I wouldn't want to see lost because this bill ended up resulting in a position that is more generic rather than one with really specific skills and an understanding of what to look for in very specific environments. Actually, that's a pretty good summary of the argument.

The government needs to assure not just the other legislators in this chamber but the population of this province that in the course of breaking through these silos and making sure that information can be used so that the collective good is served, it won't result in a reduction in the quality of inspection work done by people in a broad range of areas.

Aside from that, there is a question of the workload. If someone is sent into a factory to do a health and safety inspection and is required at the same time to do a variety of inspections around toxic chemicals and emissions, one has to be concerned about the total burden they will be carrying. We already know that in this province those who are responsible for inspecting and enforcing in the environmental area are way, way overburdened. If you go to the report of the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, under "Neglecting Our Basic Obligations," his comments about what is really happening with environment inspection and enforcement in this province, you can see that we already have a severe problem with inspection that has nothing to do with multitasking or siloing but a lack of skilled and capable personnel who can actually do the work that's needed.

There was one particular area that the Environmental Commissioner cited under "Neglecting Our Water Wells." Though studies have shown that a high proportion of private drinking water wells in Ontario are contaminated with bacteria, nitrates or other dangerous substances, serious limitations in the wells regulation make it difficult for the Ministry of the Environment, now severely lacking trained staff, to prosecute violations. Revisions to wells regulations in 2003 lowered chlorination levels for disinfecting new wells to an "inadequate" level, according to an MOE advisory panel, and uncertainties in the interpretation of complicated provisions of the regulation also mean that it is extremely hard to enforce.

We already have a situation where we don't have enough environmental inspectors. Those that we do have are dealing with regulations that are quite complex and, in the case of water wells, not now being properly enforced. The idea that one would benefit the collective good, benefit the citizenry, by opening up silo walls so that these people were responsible for inspecting in other

areas as well doesn't seem to be a reasonable approach to me. In fact, it opens up a variety of substantial problems.

Similarly, the Environmental Commissioner talks about nutrient management, "Amending the Nutrient Management Regulation." He states that the government has amended the regulation under the Nutrient Management Act that sets out how farmers must apply manure and biosolids, such as sewage sludge to their land. Unfortunately, only six years after the Walkerton tragedy, some of the changes have weakened both accountability and the assurance that farmers are following the rules that protect human health. For example, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs no longer has to approve the nutrient management strategies of large livestock operations unless they are expanding or are located within 100 metres of a municipal well. The changes also mean that farmers are no longer legally required to keep records of how they comply with their own nutrient management plans, which may make key aspects of both the regulation and the Nutrient Management Act itself virtually unenforceable.

My sense from reading the comments of the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario is not so much that our problem here is a lack of universality in the ability of environmental inspectors, not so much a concern that they aren't able to benefit from input from other departments and other jurisdictions; the concern is that there are too few of them, and the legislation itself is now so complex as to be, in a number of instances, virtually unenforceable. The question that occurs to me as I go through that is, why is the government bringing forward this bill? What is the end point if it isn't actually to make the enforcement of regulation more effective, if the point is not to in fact protect the population as a whole?

I would say that you can look at other instances in the environmental field where we don't have adequate inspection at this point, adequate enforcement of law. For instance, there are regulations requiring firms to conduct waste and packaging audits and to develop waste reduction plans based on those audits. Those are very key tools for diversion. As we all know, disposal of waste in this province is extraordinarily controversial. To the extent that we can divert waste from disposal, we can both benefit this province environmentally and also reduce the amount of conflict that goes on in our society. Unfortunately, we aren't even coming close to meeting the waste diversion targets that were identified in the last election. Because we don't have inspectors, we haven't been enforcing the regulations that we do have on the books. So again I ask, what will be the utility of this act in putting multiple tasks on the backs of inspectors if in at least one key ministry, and I suspect others, we are not even enforcing the laws as they exist now?

I would say that it is up to this government to put its house in order and to actually, before it goes—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): That's a tall order.

Mr. Tabuns: I appreciate the kind comment from my colleague.

I think it behooves this government to not only try to rely on this legislation to deal with the problems we face with inspection and enforcement but to actually ensure that there are adequate staff in place—adequate inspectors, adequate law enforcers—so that when we pass legislation in this House it is of consequence. We all know examples, I'm sure, of situations in which lack of inspection or enforcement effectively leaves legislation a dead letter.

When I was a city councillor in the old city of Toronto, we had a noise bylaw which was a very handy noise bylaw. As you know, the density in downtown Toronto and the zoning is such that you have commercial uses right beside residential uses, which is fair enough; in fact, I think it has contributed tremendously to the vitality of the city of Toronto. But the reality was that from time to time there were problems with commercial operations, generally nightclubs, that were not interested in making the investments that they needed to make in sound-proofing so that people living near those operations could actually get a night's sleep. In the old city of Toronto, population—what?—750,000, there were three noise inspectors for the whole city. It's a very good way to have a law that looks fabulous on the books but in the end doesn't deliver the goods. No one who operates a noisy business is offended, because you never have enough enforcement officers to actually go and do something. And people who are disturbed get to know that there is a law on the books, so that makes them feel good as well.

Those fundamental problems of actually ensuring that there are people in place so that when laws are passed there are consequences are far more important than the legislation before us.

1900

I understand that the privacy commissioner still has to comment on this bill, has to comment about the whole question of sharing of information. I look forward to his comments. They will put another light on what's before us and give us a better sense as to whether or not what has been proposed has the good sense, the logic in it to allow for improvement in civil service performance, as well as real protection of the interests of citizens who may be caught up in this whole matter.

I would say that it will be interesting in committee to go through the commentary from the public, commentary from those who care about the bill and commentary from people from all three parties as to what should be done to make sure that this bill is actually functional and useful. With that commentary, I'll cede the floor.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I feel a very short speech coming on: only to say that I agree with everything that was said by my colleague and did realize we had an agreement.

The Acting Speaker: Are there further questions and comments?

The member may wish to respond.

Mr. Tabuns: I continue to be gratified by the confidence the whip for the third party shows in me. Thank you, Mr. Bisson, for endorsing my words. I look forward to you doing that many times in the future, including in caucus.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Bisson: I was going to use the two minutes as a way of being able to get a couple of quick comments on the record, and I do say they will be quick.

Mr. Chudleigh: Are you using the same notes?

Mr. Bisson: No, no. He's got the briefing note. There are a couple of notes on this particular bill that I wanted to speak to, and that is to the whole issue of inspection.

The government is moving in a direction where they're basically going to make multiple—it's like multi-tasking. I'm out of the mining sector, where I worked in the maintenance section underground and in the mills as an electrician. The employers of the day used to say, "We've got to teach you people how to multi-task. The electricians should be able to do the welders' job, and the welders should be able to do the machinists' job, and the machinists, when it's stuck, should be able to do"—you get the idea. The idea is that you would not only be a tradesperson in your own trade, but you were expected to know a whole bunch about everybody else's trade. That's where this bill is going a little bit.

I understand the urge on the part of the government to make a more efficient system of inspection; I understand the will or the want to do that. But I just want to say that it's not without its downfalls. For example, let's say you have an inspector—we'll talk about health and safety specifically—who happens to be the electrical health and safety inspector for the Ministry of Labour as far as mining. I think it's a little bit unfair to say that you could utilize an inspector who works for the Ministry of Agriculture and Food or the Ministry of Transportation or whatever other ministry to come in and issue an order under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, first of all, which is a very technical act that needs a lot of knowledge as far as how it works, to be aware of what the relationships are between the workers, their employer and the ministry when it comes to that act, but more importantly when it comes to the technicality of what it is that you're trying to make a decision on.

I'm going to tell you a bit of a story that demonstrates just how serious this could be at times. When I worked at the Pamour mine, McIntyre division, some years ago, we had a health and safety inspector from the Ministry of Labour come in who said that he would like to have the health and safety rep who's responsible for electrical go with him on his inspection, so they gave me a call. It was just a snap inspection, so I showed up and I started walking around, visiting the mine with this particular inspector. The point is—I'll cut it very short—that we ended up on a particular section of the hoist where the overspeed controls were faulty. The inspector noticed there was a problem with that particular hoist and issued an order for it to be fixed. I would not want to be in the situation, having to travel up and down on that convey-

ance, where all of a sudden the Ministry of Labour says, "Well, times are tough and we don't have a lot of money. Rather than having two health and safety inspectors, we think we can do it with one because we can get the regular health and safety inspector to go out and do the job of the specialized health and safety inspector" when it comes to electrical, mechanical or whatever it might be. In a case like that, nobody would know where to look unless you're actually trained in that particular type of work. It would be like having the person at the ministry responsible for elevator inspections be replaced by somebody who normally is an inspector at an abattoir or an inspector in the forest or an inspector wherever it might be.

I think we've got to be careful about how we structure this bill. I look forward to understanding exactly how the government wants to do this, because you could end up in a situation where you give the power to inspectors to make decisions on issues that, quite frankly, they don't know a lot about. I think we need to be careful.

I understand that the government wants to deal with the more upfront kind of stuff; for example, when a person walks onto a job site and sees something that's wrong and should be fixed, there should be an ability to say, "I'm not going to wait until the actual inspector comes in in order to do the shutdown or to issue the order. I'll act on what I see now," in the most extraordinary cases. If we're just doing it in the most extraordinary cases, where we give inspectors the ability to issue orders under other acts where they may not have jurisdiction, even that's difficult, but I can understand it to an extent. I don't think I support it at the end, but I can understand the logic, to a degree.

I come back to the point that a lot of this is very technical; for example, if you look at the Ministry of Agriculture, those people who do the testing and do the inspections of abattoirs and farms etc. It's a very specialized field. You don't just take somebody in off the street and say, "Here's a one-week crash course for you to go out and do inspections in an abattoir or on a farm," or wherever it might be. It takes a person who has worked in the field, who understands what the business is all about, who understands the processes of the business and who, most importantly, understands the act. I guess that's where I'm having a problem. What you could end up with is an inspector who's going out to do something and is going to issue an order to somebody but they have limited knowledge of what is contained in the act. I think that's where I get worried.

I want to put on the record that this can be problematic, depending on how it's done. We need to be very clear, through the process, to make sure that the government, in pulling this together, takes those points into account. I think we need to hear from some inspectors who are in the field. We need to hear from business owners who are out there and also the representatives of the workers, the unions themselves, if that's appropriate, to hear what people have to say about this and, "Can this be made to work?" I'm not convinced in my mind that in

the end this will work in all instances. There might be a few cases where the jurisdiction might be different but the work is somewhat similar and you're able to make some kind of fit and adjustment as far as training. But I can tell you, as my good friends across the way know, that a lot of this stuff is very technical when it comes to inspection and you just can't have somebody come in and all of a sudden enforce a section of an act of which they have limited knowledge and, worse, may have very limited or no knowledge of the actual industry that they're doing the inspection in.

I don't want to be in the position further down the road where an overzealous government all of a sudden says, "Do you know what? Rather than having inspectors in each of the various ministries to inspect specific acts, we're going to reduce the number of inspectors and utilize them more efficiently." Well, we know what that means; it will mean that you'll have inspectors going out to an employer's work site or going into a plant or whatever it be and making decisions on things on which they have limited knowledge. This could not only be problematic from a health and safety perspective, but imagine how the employer feels if he or she is in a situation where an inspector is coming in issuing orders on something they know little about. I wanted to put that on the record.

I look forward to seeing how the government is going to deal with this. I must say that I do remain skeptical on this one. I think it's fraught with problems. We'll just see, through the hearing process, exactly how far the government is going to go to listen to people who know a lot more about this than we do, and to hear what the actual inspectors have to say and those people whom the inspectors come in contact with.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Seeing none, further debate? Is there any other member who wishes to debate?

Seeing none, the minister may wish to respond. The Minister of Labour is indicating in the negative.

Mr. Peters has moved second reading of Bill 69. Shall the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Shall the bill be referred for third reading?

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the bill be referred to the standing committee on general government.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour? Agreed. So ordered.

Orders of the day.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Shall the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1911.

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No. 123A

N° 123A

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 21 November 2006

Mardi 21 novembre 2006

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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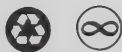
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 21 November 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 21 novembre 2006

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CONSIDERATION OF BILL 107

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): The decision by the McGuinty Liberals to invoke closure on Bill 107 committee hearings is an undemocratic and draconian dismissal of conscientious criticism that groups representing concerned, vulnerable Ontarians had expected and deserved to bring forward.

In its arrogance, the McGuinty government has decided it doesn't need to hear from the following: Catherine Dunphy and David Lepofsky of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Alliance, Avvy Go of the Metro Toronto Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic, and Margaret Parsons and Royland Moriah of the African Canadian Legal Clinic.

The McGuinty Liberals' decision to prevent these and many others from expressing their views on human rights is neither democratic nor respectful of their rights as citizens and as stakeholders on this important issue. If this is the Liberal agenda for democratic renewal, then the very foundation of our parliamentary democracy and legislative traditions are in serious jeopardy indeed.

The people of Ontario are watching this process, and they will judge the McGuinty Liberal government accordingly.

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry–Prescott–Russell): I would like to tell you today about how Ontarians are gaining access to drugs faster and at lower costs. On June 20, the McGuinty government passed the Transparent Drug System for Patients Act. This legislation will create a stronger, more effective and patient-focused drug system for Ontarians.

Part of our plan includes the provincial government becoming the second-in-line payer for the federal public service health care plan and for working seniors with private insurance plans. This may sound complicated, but what it really means is that the federal plan will be the first to pay for the cost of their retirees' prescription drugs, and the ODB will cover the rest. There is no net cost to the pensioners for drugs covered by the ODB. In

fact, the federal government covers a broader array of drugs than the provincial plan.

We also support plans by the federal government to introduce a drug benefit card for its public servants, just as we have with the Ontario drug benefit. This will eliminate any paperwork required by federal public service pensioners, even with our changes.

We are surprised that John Baird is suddenly not in support of provinces getting their fair share. As a former provincial cabinet minister, we would expect more from him. The citizens of his Ottawa West–Nepean riding, many of whom are retired federal employees, certainly expect more from their—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

CONSIDERATION OF BILL 107

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean–Carleton): The McGuinty Liberals have spent \$106,000 to advertise public hearings that won't now take place because they don't think it is important for MPPs to hear from the people.

I'm speaking out on behalf of the people when the McGuinty government has decided to shut out of the debate on Bill 107, the human rights act. The following people are:

—Emily Noble, president of the Elementary Teachers' Federation;

—Noulmook Sutdhibhaslip of Asian Community AIDS Services;

—Marilyn Oladimeji of the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres;

—John Argue of the Ontario Coalition for Social Justice;

—Raj Dhaliwal of the Canadian Auto Workers;

—Maria York of the Canadian Institute of Workers;

—Barbara Anello and Lina Anani of the Disabled Women's Network.

The people won't be heard. The McGuinty government, by arbitrarily deciding to prevent them from testifying at public hearings, has just told these people and organizations, as well as approximately 200 others, that it doesn't care what they have to say. We on the Conservative side of the Legislature are appalled by that. We believe that Bill 107 should be open to public consultation and that the people of Ontario have a right to be heard. We will be doing everything we possibly can to make sure that that is the case.

COMMUNITY LIVING OAKVILLE

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I've got a good-news announcement today. I stand before the House to recognize an organization that has played an important role for individuals with challenges who live in Oakville.

Community Living Oakville is a self-advocacy organization that firmly believes, as we all do, that every member of our society has a right to live a meaningful and dignified life within their community. To that end, Community Living provides families and individuals with the tools necessary to ensure they can live independently and participate fully.

Recently, at the fifth annual veterans appreciation luncheon hosted by MEDiChair, a local Oakville company owned by Kristen and David Courtney, I had the pleasure of presenting a certificate of appreciation to World War II veteran and founder of Community Living Oakville, Mr. Roy Keller.

Community Living has done amazing work in my riding, including promoting local businesses to provide employment to individuals who could really benefit from that experience. I'm a proud supporter of this program. Since my election in 2003, I've had the privilege of having Mr. Steven Muir working in my constituency office in Oakville. He has proven to be a fantastic addition to the Oakville team. Today I'm proud to also welcome to the House, along with Mr. Muir, four other members of Community Living: Catharine Thomson, Kim Schrochonk, Kerry Bat and Tony Garcia. Please give them a warm welcome.

CONSIDERATION OF BILL 107

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): The McGuinty Liberals have decided that they know better than the people and the groups who deal with human rights concerns on an ongoing basis. Today, the McGuinty Liberals plan to shut their ears and muzzle anything the following groups may have to say about human rights:

—Orville Endicott and Dawn Roper of Community Living Ontario;

—Nancy Schular and Seema Shaw of the Ontario Disability Support Plan Action Coalition;

—Malcolm Buchanan of Civil Rights in Public Education Inc.;

—Steven Adler of the Canadian Jewish Congress;

—Roselyn Forrester of Canadian Transsexuals Fight for Rights.

These are among the 200 people who thought they would have a chance to share their experiences, insight, concerns, criticisms and suggestions, some of whom have already been scheduled to speak.

In fact, the Liberal government spent \$160,000 to advertise for people to appear at hearings. They spent staff time scheduling these meetings. Now the McGuinty Liberals, if they proceed with cutting off public hearings on Bill 107 prematurely, are telling these people and

many more to go away. The McGuinty government doesn't think they have anything worth saying.

Every member of the McGuinty caucus should be ashamed of themselves. Many people whose voices are being ignored are in the gallery today. If you have any integrity left, you will publicly apologize to them and withdraw your closure motion.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. Member for Oxford. Minister of Education.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Simcoe North. The member for Oak Ridges.

Interjection.

The Speaker: The member for Oak Ridges will come to order.

The member for Hamilton East.

1340

CHILDREN'S MENTAL
HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): This morning, Children's Mental Health Ontario was here at Queen's Park trying to get the ear of members to talk about the dire straits that children with mental health problems and the agencies that serve them are in. It is no surprise that the challenges in children's mental health are becoming more severe and the problems more acute, having had no base funding increase in that sector for 14 years.

Next week, the McGuinty government will be unveiling its policy framework document for the future of children's mental health in Ontario. It's at least a year overdue, but many were holding out hope that it would offer greater support to the children with mental health issues, their families, caregivers and service providers.

This morning, the frustration and helplessness these agencies are feeling was palpable. Unless the McGuinty Liberals back up their policy framework with the resources to fund children's mental health services appropriately, helping children overcome their difficulties will be as challenging as ever. There are compelling reasons for ending the funding deep-freeze. Funding these agencies appropriately means preventing problems in our troubled children and youth from spinning out of control. It means early enough intervention that kids don't end up in places where nobody wants to see them, like on a coroner's slab, for example, or stuck in the spiral of the criminal justice system as young people.

Today, as mental health agencies have clearly made their case for increased support, I say to the McGuinty government, quit starving these agencies and quit pretending that better coordination is going to solve everything. Everyone knows that resources for programs and treatment are what will make a difference in these children's lives. Preventative action is essential. Better funding will be a step forward that has been a long time

in coming. Anything else continues to erode services, close beds and forsake our fragile children.

SKILLS TRAINING FOR ABUSED WOMEN

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): Yesterday, my community received some very good news as the minister responsible for women's issues, Sandra Pupatello, announced a \$4-million training program that will help women who have experienced or are at risk of experiencing domestic violence find employment.

As part of that announcement, the minister advised that the Nipissing First Nation, as the lead agency in my area, will receive \$500,000 to help 60 women, including aboriginal women, women with disabilities and women from rural and isolated communities. I am delighted that the Nipissing First Nation has taken the lead on this and that they have been chosen as one of 10 pilot projects across the province.

Yesterday's announcement will provide the tools to the women of Nipissing who want to rebuild their lives by seeking freedom from an abusive situation. This new program will offer them education and training to find jobs that will put them on the road to financial independence.

Each program has been developed through a partnership with three different sectors: a violence-against-women group, a training organization and an employer. In our area, we have a number of partners that have signed on to this great initiative: Canadore College, YES Employment Services, Disability Employment Opportunities Committee, Ojibway Family Resource Centre, People for Equal Partnership in Mental Health, Ontario Northland Transportation Commission, the OPP and Tembec, as well as all of our women's shelters in the district. The funding will allow these great partners to provide much-needed services in our community.

This summer, Madeleine Meilleur, minister of Community and Social Services, and I visited the Ojibway Family Resource Centre and were very impressed with the services they provide. This initiative will give them one more tool to help the women they are helping—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): I rise in the House today to talk about the McGuinty government's record on public infrastructure renewal. This government recognizes the payoffs that come out of investing in Ontario's infrastructure, which means long-term investment in Ontario's future.

Through ReNew Ontario, the McGuinty government is investing more than \$30 billion in revitalizing Ontario's infrastructure over the next five years. This is in direct contrast to the previous government, which for years downloaded costs for infrastructure maintenance

onto municipalities and left our province in dire disrepair, way behind in keeping up our systems in a functional and responsible way.

This government also understands that health care is another area that requires forward thinking in terms of infrastructure investment and, as a result, has worked to develop plans for 105 health care projects which will see \$5 billion worth of investments over the five years.

I'm happy to say that the rebuilding of West Lincoln Memorial Hospital in Grimsby, in my riding, is part of that project. It's something the community worked very, very hard, first of all, to keep their hospital from being closed under the previous government, and second, to have it rebuilt, and our government is moving forward with that.

We also have the Places to Grow Act, which helps give municipalities a framework for sustainable development. I want to point out that the sorts of investments we have taken part in show long-term vision. We are not just about the next election; we're looking way out for future generations' benefit.

HYDRO REBATES

Mr. David Oraziotti (Sault Ste. Marie): Yesterday, I had the privilege of announcing our government's northern electricity transition program in Sault Ste. Marie on behalf of Premier McGuinty and Minister Ramsay, which is helping to support St. Marys Paper, one of the largest employers in my riding, as well as to support many other pulp and paper mills across the north with a 15% reduction in energy costs.

This investment is worth \$140 million to the pulp and paper companies, the anchors of the forestry industry. The new rebate program, combined with other measures we have taken, will mean our mills' electricity costs are better than the North American average and competitive in Canada.

Here is what Ron Stern, president of St. Marys Paper had to say: "I appreciate the efforts of the province to help our industry through these very difficult times. This program will help us deal with our electricity costs and help us move towards greater electricity efficiency."

Our investments directly into forest business operations are unique. It's something that no other government, no other party, has ever done. The leader of the NDP publicly criticized our targeted energy rebate for pulp and paper companies, but when his party was in power road costs and forest inventories were downloaded to the industry, both of which we have uploaded since taking government. The NDP built no new electrical supply, paid \$150 million to cancel the Manitoba power agreement, hydro rates went up 40% and 14 mills closed.

Our government has now committed over \$1 billion to help the forestry industry, its workers and their families. I want to thank Premier McGuinty, Minister Ramsay and our northern members in particular for their collective support of businesses like St. Marys Paper.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

COMPENSATION FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME AMENDMENT ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'INDEMNISATION DES VICTIMES D'ACTES CRIMINELS

Mr. Runciman moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 160, An Act to amend the Compensation for Victims of Crime Act / Projet de loi 160, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'indemnisation des victimes d'actes criminels.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): The bill touches on four areas. The primary one is the lump sum compensation for catastrophic injuries suffered by victims of crime. The catalyst for this was Louise Russo, who was the victim of a botched mob contract killing attempt. Ms. Russo regrettably was obligated, because of the shortcomings of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, to plea bargain to negotiate with members of organized crime to enable her to live in a reasonable fashion, despite the very serious injuries that she suffered.

This bill, along hopefully with the results of the Ombudsman's investigation, will better address the very serious and legitimate concerns of victims of crime in this province.

MOTIONS

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice concerning this afternoon's debate on the report of the Integrity Commissioner.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Bradley has asked for unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding this afternoon's debate on the recommendation of the Integrity Commissioner. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I move that the time for the debate on the motion relating to the report of the Integrity Commissioner be apportioned equally among the recognized parties in the House; and

That at 6 p.m. the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of the motion and any amendments thereto; and

That in the case of any division required, the division bell shall be limited to 10 minutes, the members called in once and all divisions taken in succession.

The Speaker: Mr. Bradley moves that the time for the debate on the motion relating to the report of the Integrity Commissioner be apportioned equally among the recognized parties in the House; and

That at 6 p.m. the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of the motion and any amendments thereto; and

That in the case of any division required, the division bell shall be limited to 10 minutes, the members called in once and all divisions taken in succession.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

1350

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

HYDRO REBATES

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): Yesterday in Thunder Bay, I had the pleasure of joining Premier McGuinty to announce a program that will help Ontario's forest sector build a bridge to a more secure and energy-efficient future and a brighter outlook for the families and northern communities that depend on that sector.

Through the northern pulp and paper electricity transition program, this government is making available \$140 million in electricity relief to northern pulp and paper mills over the next three years, giving the industry the time it needs to make the transition to greater energy efficiency.

This now brings our commitment to the forest sector to more than \$1 billion.

Our pulp and paper sector is the largest electricity user in northern Ontario, and it is more vulnerable to rising energy costs. It has been the most affected by the circumstances of the past three years.

All communities in the north will benefit indirectly since pulp and paper mills are the anchor for the whole forestry sector. Northern pulp and paper mills that use a minimum of 50,000 megawatt hours annually will be eligible to receive rebates on the cost of their electricity retroactive to October 1 of this year. For their part, the mills receiving a rebate must commit to implementing plans to boost their energy efficiency.

We are putting this program in place to help our mills secure their future. It will effectively reduce the cost of electricity that the mills purchase by about 15% over the three years. Combined with the other measures taken by the province, this reduction will ensure our mills' electricity costs are better than the average for North America and in the middle of the pack in Canada.

This initiative has been well received by the industry. Let me share a few supportive comments from yesterday.

Ronald Stern, president and CEO of St. Marys Paper, said, "This program will help us deal with our electricity costs and move us toward greater energy efficiency."

The president and CEO of Tembec, Jim Lopez, said, "The program announced today is a significant step both in terms of closing the gap on power rates with competing jurisdictions and helping companies generate the funds that will support investments to make their mills less dependent on purchased energy."

And this from Ken Buchanan—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I need the government House leader to move. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Ramsay: "This is great news for Ontario's forest sector. It helps us stay competitive. It will keep jobs in the north. This is good for our industry and a 'win' for the communities in our region. Our sawmills need pulp and paper operations to use the wood chips they produce, and this helps to ensure that."

The rebate program is the latest in a series of steps our government has taken to help the forest industry address electricity costs. Other measures include:

- encouraging large power consumers in the forest sector to undertake self-generation power projects through our forest sector prosperity grant and loan guarantee program;

- extending the rate cap on Ontario Power Generation's non-prescribed supply;

- establishing a cogeneration power procurement program under the Ontario Power Authority; and

- setting up an Ontario Power Authority program to compensate companies for load shedding and shifting during high-cost power peaks.

The forest industry is one of Ontario's most important economic engines. In addition to sales of about \$18 billion and exports of approximately \$9 billion, this industry provides 200,000 direct and indirect jobs across Ontario.

As the Premier said yesterday, behind these numbers are real people, real families and real hopes and dreams for the future. That is why the government is focusing like never before on the economic challenges facing Ontario's forest industry and the social impacts these challenges have had on all of our communities.

During the past year and a half, Premier McGuinty and I have announced assistance packages for the forest industry worth \$900 million over five years. As I've mentioned, yesterday's announcement brings our commitment to the forest sector to more than \$1 billion. This includes a five-year, \$350-million loan guarantee program and a three-year, \$150-million forest sector prosperity fund. These programs are aimed at leveraging new investment in a range of areas, including energy conservation and cogeneration, value-added manufacturing and more.

We have established the forest sector competitiveness secretariat to administer the forest sector prosperity fund and the loan guarantee program.

In total, my ministry's forest sector competitiveness secretariat has received 35 applications to date for funding from our prosperity fund and loan guarantee

program that, if approved, would result in more than \$1.2 billion in new investment in Ontario's forest sector.

We've already succeeded in leveraging tens of millions in new investment, and there is more to come. In the next few weeks, I'll be making further announcements in that regard.

This government has taken action and made great strides in putting Ontario's pulp and paper industry back on the right track. We will continue working to help the sector re-establish its competitiveness and regain a bright, prosperous future for the industry and for the people of northern Ontario.

ONTARIO FRANCOPHONIE AWARDS

PRIX DE LA FRANCOPHONIE DE L'ONTARIO

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Last night in Ottawa, I was delighted to take part, along with Premier Dalton McGuinty, MPPs Jean-Marc Lalonde and Phil McNeely, and over 400 guests from Ontario's francophone community, in the first ever annual Ontario Francophonie Awards ceremony.

Created by the government of Ontario as part of the celebrations for the 20th anniversary of the French Language Services Act, the Ontario Francophonie Awards honour both francophones and francophiles who have made outstanding contributions to the social, economic, political and cultural vitality of the francophone community.

Au nom du gouvernement de l'Ontario, je félicite chaleureusement les quatre lauréats de ces premiers Prix de la francophonie de l'Ontario : M^{me} Caroline Andrew, professeure titulaire à l'École d'études politiques de l'Université d'Ottawa; M^{me} Annie Dell, directrice régionale du Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité de l'Ontario pour la région centre-sud-ouest; M. Gérald Savoie, président-directeur général de l'hôpital Montfort; et M. Raymond Tremblay, recteur de l'Université de Hearst.

Dès le 1^{er} avril 2007, j'encourage tous les Ontariens et toutes les Ontariennes à présenter des mises en candidature pour les Prix de la francophonie de l'Ontario 2007, de façon à ce que le gouvernement puisse reconnaître officiellement les réalisations exceptionnelles de certains de nos concitoyens et concitoyennes.

Depuis son arrivée au pouvoir, le gouvernement McGuinty a démontré une volonté ferme de soutenir la croissance et l'essor du français, non seulement comme langue d'accès aux services publics, mais comme source de dynamisme social, économique et culturel.

La création des Prix de la francophonie de l'Ontario s'ajoute à la liste déjà longue des réalisations du gouvernement McGuinty visant à renforcer la communauté francophone et à accroître l'étendue et la qualité des services offerts aux Ontariens et aux Ontariennes francophones.

À titre d'exemple, sous le gouvernement McGuinty, des investissements importants ont été faits au profit de l'éducation de langue française en Ontario, et ce aux niveaux élémentaire, secondaire et postsecondaire. Ces efforts concertés et soutenus se poursuivent de sorte que l'apprentissage des jeunes francophones se fasse dans un milieu stimulant et de qualité.

Le gouvernement a aussi su innover en lançant la politique d'aménagement linguistique, un bel exemple du savoir-faire et de l'originalité de l'Ontario. La politique d'aménagement linguistique du gouvernement de l'Ontario, une première au Canada, est citée en exemple ailleurs au pays.

Dans le domaine de la santé, le gouvernement McGuinty consacre 185 \$ millions à l'agrandissement de l'hôpital Montfort à Ottawa, un investissement colossal et essentiel pour l'essor de cette institution unique en Ontario.

Toujours dans le domaine de la santé, la nouvelle Loi de 2006 sur l'intégration du système de santé local prévoit la création d'un conseil consultatif provincial sur les services de santé en français. La loi garantit aussi aux francophones une participation active à la planification des services au niveau local.

Ces avancées en santé seront déterminantes pour l'avenir des soins de santé en français.

1400

Que dire de TFO, ce joyau de l'univers télévisuel franco-ontarien auquel le gouvernement McGuinty a décidé d'accorder la pleine gouvernance?

Enfin, il y a la désignation de Brampton, de Callander et de Kingston en vertu de la Loi sur les services en français, des régions où le nombre accru de francophones se traduit par une offre plus grande de services gouvernementaux en français.

Il y aurait tant à dire. Cependant, je suis convaincue que les francophones de l'Ontario savent que l'engagement de notre gouvernement à l'égard de la francophonie ontarienne est réel, comme en témoigne la remise des Prix de la francophonie en Ontario.

En Ontario, la francophonie n'est pas une abstraction, grâce aux Ontariens et Ontariennes francophones qui lui donnent vie chaque jour.

Other Ontarians make it real as well, such as all the francophiles of our province who support the French fact and bring it to life through their work, their families, their daily activities and all kinds of gestures, both big and small.

Our government is determined to continue to support the vitality of this vibrant, important part of the fabric that makes up this great province of ours.

HEALTH PROMOTION PROMOTION DE LA SANTÉ

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): On this day in 1986, the very first International Conference on Health Promotion took place in Ottawa. Organized by the World Health Organization, 212 dele-

gates representing 38 countries met to exchange experiences and share knowledge on the topic of health promotion. This event is of historic importance, and it resulted in the creation of the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion.

The Ottawa charter is significant and was named the "third public health revolution" by Dr. Lester Breslow, professor emeritus, health services, UCLA School of Public Health. The first two public health revolutions took place in the 19th and 20th centuries and were about the control of infectious disease and the battle against non-communicable diseases.

The Ottawa charter defined health promotion as "the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve, their health." These elements are commonly referred to as the social determinants of health and can be achieved by the following actions set out in the charter: building healthy public policy, creating supportive environments, strengthening community action, developing personnel skills, and reorienting health services.

The Ottawa charter was groundbreaking because of its progressive stance on health and health care. It encouraged governments to focus more and better address health promotion and illness prevention, and took a holistic view of public health. It is precisely this type of vision which led to the creation of Ontario's first Ministry of Health Promotion in the summer of 2005 by Premier McGuinty.

Building on the work in Ottawa 20 years ago today, subsequent international conferences have set the course for global health promotion. Results from these influential conferences have formed the basis of the Ministry of Health Promotion's mandate to encourage and support Ontarians to pursue an active, healthy life. Doing so is key to wellness and essential in improving quality of life and preventing illness. These functions now have one central home in government, which provides a natural link between the study and the application of health promotion.

Nous savons que découvrir des moyens qui inciteront les Ontariens et Ontariennes à adopter des modes de vie plus sains préviendra ou retardera l'apparition de maladies chroniques.

By doing so, we may be able to create an atmosphere of awareness of the importance of making better choices to reduce injury and illness, limiting the toll, both human and financial, that chronic disease exacts on our population.

The McGuinty government recognizes that the values of health promotion run across ministry lines, exactly as the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion envisioned. That is why the Premier created an interministerial committee on healthy living, chaired by myself and comprising representatives from 10 ministries. We are determined to improve the coordination and communication on health promotion issues, policies and programs through horizontal discussions.

In keeping with the legacy of the Ottawa charter, the Ministry of Health Promotion will host its first-ever

Healthy Eating and Active Living Conference in Toronto on November 29 and 30. I'm pleased to report that, joining my parliamentary assistants, Peter Fonseca and Shafiq Qaadri, will be 600 people from across this province. They will be involved in supporting local and international health and recreational professionals, community workers and others who are striving to promote healthy eating and active living and highlighting the government's health promotion activities and progress being made on action plan deliverables.

In conclusion, the Ottawa charter has made a significant impact throughout the world on the importance of health promotion, and I am very pleased that it took place in my hometown of Ottawa 20 years ago today. By supporting and building on the charter's mandate, the Ontario government is making health promotion a priority.

If we call the Ottawa charter the "third public health revolution" on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the charter, I'm proud to declare that we are making great strides in prevention and in education on health promotion so Ontarians can live healthy, long and more active lives.

ONTARIO FRANCOPHONIE AWARDS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): At the outset, on behalf of the Progressive Conservative Party and our leader John Tory, I want to extend congratulations to the recipients of the Francophonie awards and thank them for their contribution to the province of Ontario.

Rather than responding extensively to the statements that were made in the House by ministers, we'd like to take this limited opportunity, on behalf of the official opposition, to express our very real concerns about the way the government has opted to deal with Bill 107, the amendments to the Human Rights Act. The fact that the government last evening, to the surprise of virtually everyone in this place, and I would have to assume the members of the justice committee as well, filed a—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. This time is set aside for responses to statements made by the government. I'm sure the member is about to tie this statement to a statement made by one of the government ministers and I hope that he would get there quickly.

Mr. Runciman: Well, Mr. Speaker, that may be somewhat difficult, but I'll do my best. If I could speak French a little bit better, perhaps that would assist on this occasion. Je suis un étudiant de français.

In any event, I simply think the fact that we have this time allotted to express our very serious concerns is important and that it is going to have an impact on the business of the House as we move forward. There has been a co-operative effort on behalf of all three parties. We may have concerns with respect to statements made today or with respect to other pieces of business that the government has brought forward that are currently on the order paper for this House for debate or before

committees of the House. We have attempted in a very co-operative way to work within the House leaders' meetings and beyond that, certainly, to put our views on the record and see the business of the government proceed in a reasonably timely way.

I think that has all now been put in jeopardy by the government's decision with respect to Bill 107, and it's important that I have this opportunity to put that on the record. We're approaching the end of the session, approaching the end of this year. In fact, the decision has been made, and we hope they will take a deep breath and step back from this, otherwise from our perspective we are not going to be in a position to be able to, in a constructive way, approach the business of this House in the coming weeks.

It's critically important that that be on the record, that there be a complete and thorough understanding of the position the official opposition is taking with respect to the government's decisions to close off debate and close off hundreds of people who may wish to appear to express their concerns.

PRIX DE LA FRANCOPHONIE DE L'ONTARIO

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–Baie James): Je veux prendre cette opportunité pour dire, de la part du parti néo-démocratique, félicitations à ceux et celles qui se sont fait donner cet honneur. On connaît très bien les personnes, Caroline Andrew, Annie Dell, Gérald Savoie, et spécialement M. Raymond Tremblay, qui vient de mon comté de Hearst. On sait que ces francophones, comme les autres, sont très dévoués à la communauté. Ils travaillent très fort pour être capables d'avancer les dossiers importants pour la francophonie de l'Ontario. Comme néo-démocrates, on veut les féliciter.

Je veux aussi souligner que ce n'est pas la première fois que l'on fait ça. C'est la première fois que le gouvernement le fait comme honneur, mais l'Assemblée parlementaire de la francophonie de l'Ontario aussi, où tous les trois parties font parti du processus, qui est une manière d'honorer que l'on donne aussi, et on va justement pouvoir honorer d'autres francophones plus tard, au printemps. Donc, on les félicite.

RÉDUCTION DES COÛTS D'ÉLECTRICITÉ HYDRO REBATES

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–Baie James): Je veux dire au ministre des Richesses naturelles que votre annonce faisant affaire avec ce qui se passe avec l'électricité a été très mal acceptée par le monde du nord de l'Ontario. Je peux vous dire que si vous étiez un travailleur de Timmins à matin, l'annonce qui était faite hier ne fait absolument rien pour assurer votre emploi.

1410

On a appris ce matin, moins de 24 heures après que le gouvernement a fait son annonce faisant affaire avec le

prix de l'électricité, que la scierie de Tembec va fermer pour une période indéfinie. Une des raisons est non seulement le marché, mais aussi le prix de l'électricité. On sait que ces utilisateurs dans les scieries, tels que d'autres qui n'ont pas été affectés par l'annonce, vont se trouver d'une manière très négative. Si vous vous étiez un travailleur dans une scierie ou dans tous les autres moulins de pâte à papier qui n'ont pas été affectés, autres que les cinq qui peuvent participer dans l'annonce qui était faite hier, ça ne va faire absolument rien pour vous.

If you're a worker in many sawmills and paper mills across northern Ontario, the minister's announcement today and reannouncement of what was said yesterday by the Premier and by the minister in different parts of the province last night, in regard to electricity prices, will do absolutely nothing to safeguard your job. We have literally tens of thousands of workers in northern Ontario who have lost their jobs in the forestry sector. One of the key issues is the question of electricity. This particular announcement falls very much shy of what the mayors, unions and others have asked for.

This particular program is not a reduction in electricity prices. You're tinkering at the edges. All this is is a rebate program that is tied to meeting certain goals when it comes to energy efficiency. In other words, if a company such as Tembec, Kapuskasing, decides they want to participate, as they have, they have to be able to meet a certain target to get 100% of the one cent per kilowatt hour that they would get as a saving, if they're able to meet it. I just say that this falls short.

If you're a worker in Timmins—as the minister knows, we've had more sad news this morning—Tembec announced this morning an indefinite closure of the Tembec sawmill in the city of Timmins. This is a company that was poised to reannounce \$3.5 million of investment on a small saw line in order to make their plant more efficient, to be able to weather the storm that we've seen in forestry in northern Ontario. The announcement yesterday did absolutely nothing for Tembec. Here we are, less than 24 hours later, and the 120 workers who have lost their jobs in Timmins, and all of those related workers in the forestry sector, as contractors and others are not dancing in the streets today. They're dancing to the unemployment insurance office and they're crying. I'm saying that in a very sad way. It's a sad story. These workers are not going to benefit one iota from the announcement made yesterday.

This government hasn't figured it out. The Conservative electricity policy, as started by Mr. Harris and then implemented by Mr. Eves, was a failure. You were in opposition, Mr. McGuinty and Mr. Ramsay, at the time that the Conservatives introduced it. Like us, the New Democrats, you opposed it. You said that the deregulation and privatization of electricity would lead to job losses. You promised that if you were elected, you would not go down the same road as the Conservatives, and people elected you on the basis of thinking that you would do what you said in the last election. Instead, what have we got? We've got a McGuinty government that, if

you close your eyes and dull your ears, you'd swear to God you're listening to Mike Harris or Ernie Eves. If you listen to Mr. Duncan, the Minister of Energy, you would think that he was John Baird, because the words that they speak are absolutely no different than the words that were spoken by the former Conservative government.

We in northern Ontario, as other industrial sectors across southwestern Ontario and other parts of the province, are at our wits' end. We are losing jobs by the thousands. Why don't you wake up and realize that your electricity policies are a major share of the blame when it comes to the job losses and undo the damage you did by admitting that your energy policy has failed us?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: I'm referencing standing order 35(e), dealing with ministerial statements. I took your comments earlier as a caution, not a ruling. As I read this, it says, "Opposition parties in the House may comment for up to a total of five minutes for each party, commencing with the official opposition." There is no reference to commenting specifically on the ministerial statements, and I would ask for your clarification of that at some point, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I take your point of order and would ask you to reflect on the precedents of this House, which do maintain the ruling that I did make. I provided you with much latitude on this, but the ruling is that you are to comment on the statements by the minister.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, on that same point of order: I would refer you to standing order 23, specifically 23(e), which says that the Speaker shall call a member to order if their speech "anticipates any matter already on the Orders and Notices paper for consideration," which is precisely what the member from Leeds–Grenville did. You in fact appropriately called this to his attention, and as a veteran member of this House, I would hope that the member is familiar with standing order 23(e). Speaker, I wanted to bring that to your attention.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order: I want to point out that in the NDP's response to the statement, John Baird would take offence to being compared to the current Minister of Energy.

The Speaker: It may be a point of debate, but not a point of order.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CONSIDERATION OF BILL 107

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. Late yesterday, under the cover of darkness, your office gave orders to shut down the committee hearings on Bill 107, the human rights legislation, against the express wishes of the legislative committee, which included your own Liberal members.

Now, one week ago, the Attorney General stood in this House, and he said in question period, "I look forward to the matter being debated in the committee, not only tomorrow and the next day but however long it takes." That's what the Attorney General said: "However long it takes."

My question for the Premier is this: Why is the Premier deliberately going back on the word of his Attorney General? Why is he ignoring and refusing to hear the hundreds of people who remain to be heard on this bill? And why did you order that the debate be shut down in this manner at this time?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): There are a couple of points I want to put on the record here. First of all, I'll note in passing that the Conservatives, when in government, invoked closure 102 times, on 102 separate occasions, something that the leader of the official opposition may want to keep in mind when he considers his moral standing with respect to putting forward this point.

The second point I want to make is why it's so important for us to move ahead with improvement to our human rights system here in Ontario. Complaints presently take far too long. Five to 10 years for resolution of a complaint is simply unacceptable.

The legislation has been under discussion now for over 200 days. In fact, the call for change started some 14 years ago. The committee has toured Thunder Bay, London, Ottawa and, of course, it sat in Toronto. We were bringing forward amendments, but we think it's important that we move ahead.

Mr. Tory: The standing committee on justice policy decided that it wanted to hear from as many presenters as it could, and they unanimously—with the support of your members, the Liberal members of the committee—voted in favour of an extended hearing schedule that would in fact go beyond this month. They've got hearings booked solid, in any event, through to and including December 14. Beyond that, there were advertisements booked, on the instructions of the committee, by the clerk of the committee, at public expense of \$106,000 to put ads in the newspaper advertising the hearings that had been agreed to by the committee. This is another \$106,000 that you seem to be prepared to flush down the toilet because you have no respect for this House or for taxpayers' money.

1420

Your Attorney General said, "However long it takes," and you said, on April 27, that people would be given ample opportunity to be heard. There are hundreds of people waiting to be heard. Why are you going back on your word and not letting them be heard?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): There has been ample opportunity for this to be heard. This bill has been before the House for more than 220 days. We have had several days of second reading debate. We have had several days of public committee hearings. But let's be clear as to where each of the parties are. Last week, the

member for Whitby–Ajax put out a press release saying that we should suspend the public hearings, stop them. In the summer, the House leader for the New Democratic Party said that he would filibuster the bill. We don't think that we should stop the hearings. We don't think that the hearings should be filibustered. We believe that there should be hearings this week, that they should continue next week, and that this should come back to the House for third reading. That is in fact what is going to happen, and that is going to ensure that for the first time in 44 years, our human rights system is actually going to get a reform.

Mr. Tory: The fact of the matter is that when you are bringing about reform to a piece of legislation such as the Human Rights Code that is a foundation piece of legislation in this province, when you are doing it for the first time in 44 years, if we accept your calendar on that, that is precisely why you need to take the time to hear from people, as you said. It was you, the Attorney General, who said that we would listen for however long it takes to people who wanted to be heard on this bill. That's what you said. The fact of the matter is, the official opposition only suggested the hearings be suspended until you actually shared with them, perhaps out of a sense of respect for the opposition, the wording of hundreds of amendments you were bringing forward to your own legislation.

My question is this: What happened to the person who stood in this House and said to the opposition and to the people of Ontario, "However long it takes"? You were right then on something that's amended once in 44 years, that people deserve the right to be heard. Why are you shutting them down now? Why is the Premier bringing the guillotine down on this debate and on these people and their right to be heard? It's a disgrace, and you know it.

Hon. Mr. Bryant: I think the member knows that if in fact a matter has indefinite debate, it means that the bill will never pass. And if that is the purpose of the official opposition, then I think they should make that clear. It has been the position of the third party that in fact they do not want the bill to pass. They have said that they will filibuster the bill. Mr. Kormos said that the Chair of the justice committee will be an old man before this bill passes.

We heard today from some people who have been, in their own words, re-victimized by this very system. We heard from Stephanie Payne, who talked about a complaint with the commission that was a traumatic experience that lasted 10 years. We heard from Suvania Shiu, who said she was re-victimized by the process: Eight and a half years before the commission, and the case was in fact dismissed.

I'm not going to wait until victims of human rights are old men and old women before we have an opportunity to bring this bill back to the House for an up-or-down vote—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. New question.

Mr. Tory: My question again is to the Premier. There is no one suggesting it should go on indefinitely at all. We're just suggesting —

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The Minister of Northern Development.

The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: We're merely suggesting that the people who have expressed a wish to be heard should be heard. The reason that legislation of this type gets dealt with only once in a generation is because it is so important, because it is so complex, because the issues are difficult to deal with. There is no one who is arguing the status quo should prevail. Not one person is arguing that the backlog that has been created over time should be allowed to continue.

It was the Attorney General of Ontario, the very man who was just lecturing me, who said: "We look forward to ... getting feedback from Ontarians." "We anticipate this should go to committee." "I look forward to this debate." "I look forward to [it] being debated ... however long it takes."

These are quotes from the Attorney General.

I ask the Premier this question: At every corner, this government has broken promises. Now Mr. McGuinty has humiliated his own Attorney General—who said, "However long it takes"—by going back on the Premier's and the Attorney General's word. Will you withdraw this time allocation motion, allow people to be heard—

The Speaker: The question's been asked. Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: In government, as I'm sure the leader of the official opposition will recognize, we have a responsibility to bring about progressive reforms that meet the needs of the people of Ontario. Equally important, we have a responsibility to ensure that people have an opportunity to lend shape to policy initiatives. And of course, we also have the right, as the duly elected government of the people of Ontario, to move forward legislation once we have made a call that it's important legislation and that we've ensured that people have an opportunity to lend shape to that legislation.

This call for change started some 14 years ago. The legislation has been under discussion for over 200 days. In the end, it will have more than 40 hours of debate. Again, we're talking about a committee that did have the opportunity to tour the province. We think, all things considered, that this is an important public policy initiative. We think we've given the people of Ontario ample opportunity to lend shape to this policy. We'll be having more committee hearings, and we look forward—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Tory: What the Premier just said about having more committee hearings is not consistent with the facts, not in terms of listening to people. There will be hearings to consider amendments—hundreds, dozens of amendments that have been brought forward.

Let's trace through the chronology. On November 14, in Hansard, in question period, the Attorney General

says, "However long it takes." On November 14, Mr. Bryant, the Attorney General, writes a letter to Mrs. Margaret Parsons, in which he says that the committee intends to hold additional public hearings in the winter on dates and in locations to be determined. On November 15, the committee itself, including the Liberal members, votes in favour of an extended round of hearings at that time. And then on November 20, the guillotine is brought down by the Premier's office to shut down debate, to gag these people who want to be heard on this human rights legislation.

Premier, what happened between November 14—"However long it takes"—the letter, the vote by the committee and you bringing down the guillotine? What are you afraid of? What happened?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Mr. Bryant: The member may be mistaken about his facts. There was a published report out today which suggested that debate and committee hearings will end today. That, in fact, is not accurate. Yes, we are debating that tonight. There will be further committee hearings this week, there will be committee hearings, as I say, next week, and this bill will come back for third reading in November.

It is the very nature of this bill and this reform that this matter has been debated and studied and filibustered to death. On that basis, nothing has happened in some 44 years. The New Democratic Party empanelled a task force to look at the matter and did nothing about it. The Conservative government, which didn't even bother empanelling a task force, did nothing about it. How many days of public hearings did we have on human rights bills under the Conservatives? Zero. How many days of public hearings under the NDP? Zero. Have we had ample debate on this? Yes, we have. Yes, we—

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tory: I come back to my question. It wasn't me who stood in this House and said that they would take however long it takes to listen to the people. It wasn't me who wrote the letter to Mrs. Parsons saying that there would be hearings held in the winter on dates and in locations to be determined. In fact, if you check the motion brought forward by the government House leader, it says that the committee is authorized to meet from 9:30 to 12:30 and after routine proceedings on November 29 to consider and complete clause-by-clause consideration of the bill, and it goes on to talk about other things after that. What happened? Why don't you just stand up and admit, then, that you wrote a letter and misled this woman with respect to the fact—

The Speaker: You'll need to withdraw the offending word.

Mr. Tory: I'll withdraw that. But why don't you stand in your place and say you wrote a letter to Mrs. Parsons and were grossly inaccurate with respect to the fact that there would be further hearings that you committed to, that you didn't mean it when you said you'd let the hearings go on for however long it took to hear the people who wanted to be heard. Answer the question. What

happened? Why won't you let people be heard on this bill?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: Well, this is great. This is from the leader of a Conservative Party whose one contribution to the human rights system when they were in government was to cut the legal aid system by \$2 million, preceded only by the NDP government, which, in the year before the Tories took power, cut the legal aid system by \$2 million. Your sole contribution to this entire process has been to cut the funding for legal aid, and last week your critic said that we have to suspend public hearings on legal aid.

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We will not do that. We will not continue the tradition of cuts. We will not continue the tradition of silence. We will not continue the tradition of inaction. We will reform the human rights system in the name of those victims so that we in Ontario can have a human rights system we're proud of instead of the one, and the record you have, which you should be ashamed of.

The Speaker: New question. The leader of the third party.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. After promising advocacy groups and visible minorities concerned with human rights protection that you would hold public hearings on Bill 107, today you announced that you're cancelling the public hearings and shutting down debate.

Premier, you promised to listen to human rights advocates, not shut them out. What's your justification for this betrayal of trust and this betrayal of your promise?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I'm happy to take the question of the leader of the NDP.

I think it's really important to understand what is at stake here. What's at stake is an absolutely essential reform of an antiquated, outdated human rights system.

We have heard from many people for many years now, over a course of various governments of various political stripes, none of whom have had the courage, until ours, to decide to pick up this ball and run with it.

It's not without some controversy; we understand that. But we also think we have given the people of Ontario good opportunities to provide shape to our public policy initiative, and we think it's really important that we move forward.

As I said just a few moments ago, the legislation has been under discussion for over 200 days. We will have more than 40 hours of debate by the time this matter is brought to conclusion—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Hampton: This is once again about promises that you and your Attorney General made. Your Attorney General gave you a copy of the letter to Margaret Parsons, executive director of the African Canadian Legal Clinic, where he says, "The committee intends to hold additional public hearings in the winter on dates and in locations to be determined." You got a copy of that.

Now you're saying you don't care to hear from advocates for the vulnerable, you don't care to hear from advocates for the disabled community, you don't care to hear from advocates from visible minority communities—you don't care to listen to them or hear from them.

Premier, some of those advocates are here today. Can you tell them why the McGuinty government doesn't think you need to listen to them or hear from them after you promised to do so?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Mr. Bryant: I'm sure the leader of the New Democratic Party doesn't want to talk about the social contract being pulled out of committee: no hearings, and cutting off of debate.

I'm sure the leader of the third party would like to talk about those people who disagree with him, who are here today in the Legislature to say that we need to get these reforms and that the filibustering tactics of the third party cannot be allowed to continue forever.

I'm sure that Mr. Hampton heard from the people who support Bill 107. I'm sure he heard from June Callwood, and as well from the president of the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres. I'm sure he heard from Catherine Frazee, former chief commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission. I'm sure he heard from Buzz Hargrove, president of CAW Canada. I'm sure he also heard from the Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children. I'm sure he also heard from METRAC and from the Faye Peterson Transition House.

Why is the NDP not listening? Everybody is saying we need to change the system. We have a bill before the House to do so. Why—

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, you're the one who said to the people of Ontario that you believed in open, accountable, transparent government. You're the one who told these advocates that there would be continued public hearings and that you wanted to hear what they had to say.

Community Living Ontario is opposed to your scheme. So what have you done? You've cancelled their hearing. David Lepofsky, a pioneer in fighting for the rights of the disabled, is opposed to your scheme. So what have you done to him? You cancelled his hearing. The Asian Community AIDS Services, the Disabled Women's Network, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Alliance, what's happened to them? Cancelled, cancelled, cancelled.

Premier, it's your promise. You said you wanted to hear from these people. Tell them why you don't care what they think, what they say or how this may affect them.

Hon. Mr. Bryant: The leader of the third party opposes this bill. The leader of the third party does not want this bill to pass. The leader of the third party will do everything he can to stop this bill from ever passing. The leader of the third party doesn't care about continued debate with a view to having this bill come before the

Legislature for a vote. The leader of the third party wants to do one thing and only one thing: He wants to filibuster and derail this bill.

Why did the leader of the third party take the task force that he empanelled, led by Mary Cornish, that called for these reforms and shelve it? Why did he do that?

The Toronto Star said on November 19, "In the face of clear evidence the current system is broken, Ontario cannot afford to let this opportunity slip away." We will not let this opportunity slip away.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. New question, the leader of the third party.

Mr. Hampton: To the Premier again, because once again, this is his promise. Premier, there is no filibuster here. There's been no filibuster. The only question I've asked on this legislation is about your government's willingness to hold public hearings and to hear from all the human rights advocates who may be affected by it. So stop trying to pretend that somebody is trying to pour cement in the works. That's not happening.

Premier, what's really interesting is that you spent over \$100,000 on newspaper ads advertising that there would be public hearings. That's \$100,000 of public money. So I want to ask the Premier this: If you weren't interested in hearing from these human rights advocates, if you don't care what they say, why did you spend \$100,000 placing ads saying there would be hearings?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Just to support something my Attorney General said a moment ago, I think it's really important that we understand what's at play here. The Conservative Party and the NDP are absolutely opposed to moving ahead with human rights legislation in the province of Ontario. They've made that very clear. They are cloaking that under the guise of a desire to support additional representations to be made by members of the public. We understand that and we see through that. Our higher responsibility owed to the people of Ontario is to ensure that we reform Ontario's human rights system.

I can understand why the previous governments have shied away from that. It is fraught with some real challenges, but notwithstanding that, we've heard from Ontarians. I think we'll have close to 10 days of hearings at the end of it. We've had ample opportunity to hear from people, and we're open to more representation to be received by way of e-mail or letter, but we really think it's time for us to move ahead.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, I want to remind you of some of your comments and your Attorney General's comments of just a few years ago. Your Attorney General, when he was in opposition, said, "I, too, choked when I saw that yet another debate-killing motion was before this Legislature." He said that time allocation is a guillotine motion, "We want more debate, not less debate."

You spent \$100,000 telling everyone far and wide in the province there would be more debate and there would be public hearings, that you wanted to hear from the people who might be affected by this legislation.

Premier, if you're so opposed to guillotine motions, if you're so opposed to shutting down debate, if you're so opposed to shutting out people who want to be heard on important human rights legislation, why would you ever bring in a guillotine motion yourself that terminates the hearings and shuts down debate?

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Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Mr. Bryant: June 8, 1993, Bill 164, auto insurance: three days in committee before time-allocated. Bill 165: four days in committee before time-allocated by the NDP government. Bill 48, the social contract: one day in committee before the whole House moved on a time allocation. Bill 100, regulated health professions: five days in committee before movement of time allocation.

Let's be clear here. The third party's approach to Bill 107 is to filibuster. I'm not guessing; I'm quoting. Mr. Kormos, on August 10 in standing committee, said, "I want to filibuster the bill ... [and] you'll be an old man before this thing passes, okay?"

Well, I don't want the victims of human rights to be old men and women before this bill passes—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member for Halton.

Final supplementary?

Mr. Hampton: Besides breaking promises, the McGuinty government is very good at only reading half the quote, because what Mr. Kormos said is, "Let's just get realistic here and be practical and act in good faith, like we have so far," and have the public hearings. But do we see good faith from the McGuinty government today? No, not for a second. What we see is a government that is afraid that people who have credibility in the human rights field might criticize it; that human rights advocates like David Lepofsky might point out that your legislation isn't all that you've advertised it to be.

Isn't that the real issue, Premier? You don't want to hear from these human rights advocates because they might be critical of your legislation, and nine months before an election you're prepared to put your political future ahead of their human rights advocacy.

Hon. Mr. Bryant: I can say with a lot of confidence that in fact this government has heard from many, many, many people on this issue, both in committee hearings and outside of committee hearings. We've heard from people who support Bill 107, and believe me, I have heard from people who are opposed to it, and I've heard them several times. I've sat down with some of the people—from the letters you are quoting from—several times. We've spent hours and hours and hours debating this bill in and outside of the House. We've spent years and years and years considering these human rights reforms.

But meanwhile, what about the 2,500 people who come to the human rights system every year and who see years and years and years of delay? This reform is about ending the delay in the human rights system. And if any party is playing politics with this debate, it's that party right there.

The Speaker: New question?

Mr. Tory: A question for the Premier: In stating that both of the opposition parties were not interested or were opposed to reforming the human rights act, you made statements that had no foundation in fact. We think the system has to be fixed, and we believe that a backlog, in effect, acts to deny justice or deny access to people.

But it's very interesting to note that the Attorney General, in getting up and listing all the people who had been heard recently, listed people who had come in favour of the bill. It is very interesting to note that a lot of the people you're guillotining and gagging and who are not being heard are people who have concerns about the bill. You've decided you are not going to hear from them on a bill that we amend every 40 years or so.

My question is this: If we commit to agreeing to have this matter come to a vote first thing when we come back in the spring, will you agree to let the hearings go ahead that were scheduled and agreed to and committed to at your word by your government? Will you agree to let those hearings go ahead and let these people be heard on this fundamental piece of legislation?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Attorney General, Speaker.

Hon. Mr. Bryant: The leader of the official opposition talks about human rights reform as if it's something that the Conservative Party had been remotely interested in. Was it in your platform in the last election? No, of course it wasn't. Was it in the platform in 1999? No, of course it wasn't. Did they introduce a single bill before the Legislature to advance the human rights system in the eight years they were in office? No. They've never had an interest in improving the human rights system. Their sole contribution to the human rights system is that they cut it by \$2 million in their first year in office. So we're not going to take any lectures from that leader when it comes to reforming the human rights system.

Mr. Tory: The Attorney General should check the history books. It was John Parmenter Robarts, Conservative Premier of Ontario, who introduced the Human Rights Code in this province. But let's forget about the history.

Let me reiterate that I want to know what happened between the time the Attorney General of Ontario said, "However long it takes"—he wrote to Ms. Parsons and said there would be winter hearings. If you want to talk about good faith, I'm standing here saying that if we agree that we will allow a vote to be taken first thing when the spring session of the House begins, will you agree to let these people be heard, as you said you would in writing—your word—as you said you would in this House in response to a question, and if not, why not? Why won't you keep your word and why wouldn't you agree to a reasonable accommodation like that when it comes to human rights legislation—foundation legislation in this province that people have the right to be heard on?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Hon. Mr. Bryant: The leader of the official opposition quotes from Premier Robarts and asks what happened. I don't know what happened to the grand old Conservative Party, but I can tell you they've lost all their interest in human rights reform in the last 40 years.

Let's be clear—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'm having great difficulty hearing the Attorney General.

Attorney General?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: The member is quoting from statements that have been made over the last few months. I'd remind him of the statement made by the member for Whitby-Ajax. She said that the committee hearings should not proceed. She wanted the committee hearings to stop last week, and we're saying no, we're not going to stop the committee hearings, and no, we're not going to filibuster the hearings. Rather, we're going to make sure that an appropriate amount of committee hearings take place—more committee hearings than ever took place on the social contract, and more committee hearings than took place on just about every single bill that was before this House under the Harris-Eves government—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

Mr. Hampton: My question is to the Premier. I want to read to you a letter that is addressed to you as of today's date:

"I wish to express my profound dismay at your government's notice to invoke closure and prematurely end debate on Bill 107, An Act to reform the Ontario Human Rights Commission."

Further, "By bringing an abrupt halt to the proceedings, the opportunity to reform the legislation is lost. I fear the existing divisions will become more polarized and bitter."

This is a letter from Barbara Hall, chief commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission. If you won't listen to me and you won't listen to the human rights advocates who are here today, will you at least listen to the chief commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, whom you appointed?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Mr. Bryant: Here is the NDP trying to have it both ways. When the chief commissioner was before the justice committee hearings, the House leader for the third party, Mr. Kormos, questioned whether or not Ms. Hall was speaking on behalf of the entire commission and, as a result, he said, "We need to have every single staff person in the commission come before the justice committee and testify"—every single person. You can't question the credibility of the chief commissioner on one hand, and then rush to the defence of the chief commissioner on the other.

To speak to the chief commissioner's concerns, I can assure everybody in this House that yes, as she asks, there will be an opportunity to fine-tune the amendments; yes, the commission will be given an opportunity to address the amendments; and yes, Chief Commissioner Barbara Hall supports Bill 107.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, I want to quote further from the chief commissioner of the Human Rights Commission, whom you appointed: "It may seem trite to remind you that justice must not only be done but must be seen to be done. This is an essential truth with the law and particularly in regard to human rights. The justice policy committee clearly felt that an extended period of consultation would have value; however, the invitation may now be withdrawn. Dozens of groups and individuals who have waited to take part could be denied the opportunity at the 11th hour."

Premier, the chief commissioner is asking you to withdraw your motion of closure. I am asking you, will you do the right thing? Will you withdraw your motion of closure and hear from these human rights advocates and build consensus rather than creating division, which is what you are doing now?

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Hon. Mr. Bryant: Look, it is a matter of determining the point to which one lets the New Democratic Party filibuster this bill. There has to be a point at which the government says, "This many days and then let us have a vote."

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Erie—Lincoln. The member from Renfrew.

Attorney General?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: The member refers to justice being done and seen to be done, and that is absolutely the case. We have to ensure that there is an ample number of days and hours devoted to this bill. But I remind the member of another truism, which is that justice delayed is justice denied. For too many people who go to our human rights system, they are receiving no justice at all. We heard from people this morning who were before the human rights system for eight and a half years, for 10 years, and no justice. For these people, justice delayed means no justice at all.

This bill shortens the pipeline from complaint to resolution. That's why this bill is before the House. That's why it needs to come before this House for an up-and-down vote, and that's why we need to reform this human rights system right now.

FAIR ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa—Orléans): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Yesterday, John Tory released a policy paper discussing his plan to remove barriers faced by foreign-trained individuals. Minister, you introduced Bill 124, the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, the first legislation in Canada and North America to address the tremendous difficulty foreign-trained professionals often encounter when trying to find work in their field. This problem results in serious economic costs to our province and tragic social costs to the families of these highly skilled individuals. To fix this problem, Bill 124 targets the root

of the problem by creating a fairer process for accreditation and licensing in 34 regulated professions.

In addition to this, I know that your ministry has a history of taking innovative approaches to helping newcomers find work in their chosen field. Minister, could you tell us a little more about some other initiatives taken by your ministry already, in addition to Bill 124?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Beyond Bill 124, what we've done is, in our breaking-down-barriers plan, we're the first provincial government to ever get a provincial agreement with the federal government: \$920 million. No other government has done that; we did it. We have created immigrant gateways in Sudbury, London, Windsor, Ottawa and Toronto. For the first time, we have immigrant gateways encouraging people to go outside of the GTA. We have, for the first time, created internships in the Ontario public service. No government ever did that for the internationally trained. We now have paid internships for the internationally trained. We have a loan program. People talked about a loan program. We've established a \$5,000 loan program for any internationally trained individual. We have it in the works. We also have bridge training programs in 100 professions. And we also have doubled the funding for people seeking accreditation as doctors in this province, up to \$53 million. That's already been done.

Mr. McNeely: Thank you, Minister, for that response.

Earlier this month, I had the pleasure of having you speak to a number of community groups in my riding of Ottawa—Orléans. I thank you for participating in that round table. It was a very productive meeting and the discussions it generated were very encouraging.

Minister, I would like to follow up with you about something that you mentioned at that meeting. You stressed how important it is for governments to not just talk about taking action when it comes to issues affecting newcomers, but to practise it, and you mentioned that this government is leading by example. Can you explain some of the additional impacts this government will have in passing Bill 124?

Hon. Mr. Colle: We had a very productive meeting in Orléans with people who were advocates on behalf of newcomers. As they've been doing all across the province, the advocates keep saying, "We need strong legislation like Bill 124." That's why Bill 124 has the power to impose annual reporting and audits on all regulatory bodies. No government has ever done that. Bill 124 also has the authority to impose fines of up to \$100,000 on regulatory bodies. That's tough. It also creates an access centre within government to help the internationally trained, to give them advice and counselling and help them navigate the system. There is no access centre now, and Bill 124, if passed, would create that. It establishes, for the first time, a fairness commissioner for the foreign-trained. They don't have that right now, and Bill 124 would create that. And it creates a fair, open, due process for the internationally trained. There is none in Ontario now, and it's about time we had some.

CONSIDERATION OF BILL 107

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby–Ajax): My question is for the Attorney General. Yesterday, in response to my question, you stood in your place and guaranteed that all Ontarians will receive full representation by a lawyer throughout their complaint process under Bill 107. The Hamilton Spectator, however, reported on November 10, 2006, that you said, “The province is willing to make changes to its proposals for overhauling Ontario’s human rights systems but it won’t pour in more money.”

Minister, you can’t have it both ways. It’s time for you to be honest with the people of Ontario, particularly the most vulnerable people in Ontario. How can you possibly reconcile these two statements and provide a lawyer for every person who wants one without putting in additional funding?

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): Well, the Conservative Party can’t have it both ways. The Conservative Party cannot on the one hand cut funding to the Ontario Human Rights Commission and then, on the other hand, say that in fact they want to reform and improve the Human Rights Commission. And the member opposite can’t say last week that the committee hearings should not proceed, on the one hand, and yet we should have more committee hearings, on the other hand.

When it comes to these committee hearings and when it comes to this bill, there has been a significant amount of debate. The positions are very well known. I don’t anticipate I’m going to change the minds of some people, which is not to say that the committee amendments we’ve already presented before the committee are not going to continue to be considered and consulted on, and I look forward to the member’s comments, substantive comments, on the specific amendments that are before her right now, because we put those amendments before her in committee last week.

Mrs. Elliott: Minister, you know and I know that what I said in committee last week was that we should suspend the committee hearings until we have the full text of the amendments so that we know that your smoke-and-mirrors amendments have some substance. You know that you did not table the amendments with us; you gave us some vague statement that people are attaching to you because you’re saying the words they want to hear. But you know and I know that that’s not what the amendment said. We don’t even have the amendments. You’re the one who’s cutting off the debate; you’re the one who’s muzzling disability and racialized minority groups. And before these hearings are cut off, let’s be clear: How do you plan to find a lawyer for every person who wants a lawyer in these proceedings without putting more new money in? Let’s be honest with the people of Ontario.

Hon. Mr. Bryant: Funding for the Ontario Human Rights Commission reached a 10-year low. It happened in 1996-97, and it happened under the Harris-Eves government.

The views on this bill are well known. The views on human rights reform are well known. They’ve been

known for years. The views on Bill 107 have been known for more than 200 days. The e-mails, the letters, the meetings, the committee hearings—there have been dozens and dozens and dozens.

We know that the third party wishes only to filibuster. I don’t know if the official opposition wants to filibuster or simply derail. I do know that the only way in which we’re going to get the first reform to the human rights system in 44 years is if at some point it comes back to this House and we have an up-and-down vote on reform for the victims in Ontario, so that we can give them real, adequate and timely justice, something they’ve not had for far, far too long.

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CHILD POVERTY

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): A little change of pace: My question is to the Minister of Health Promotion. Minister, earlier this month you said that you were troubled by the fact that less than 50% of school-aged kids report eating at least five servings of fruits and vegetables every day. Your answer was to declare war on Twinkies in our schools. You said that kids need healthier foods and more physical activity to combat ill health and obesity.

Minister, if you really cared about children’s health like you say you do, you’d be declaring war on child poverty. The families, the parents of Ontario’s poorest kids, can’t afford to feed their children fruit and vegetables every day. So when will you and all of your colleagues step up and demand that your Premier keep his broken promise to our poorest kids and end the clawback of the national child benefit so that all of our kids can eat healthily every day?

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): Mr. Speaker, I would refer that to the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for franco-phone affairs): I’d like to thank the member opposite for asking this question. I wanted to reiterate that child poverty is a very, very difficult problem and that it needs a multifaceted approach. This government, since we have been elected, has invested in children in different ministries. We have invested in education; we have invested in social services; we have invested in children and youth services; we have invested in health. This government this year will have spent \$10.4 billion in my ministry. All of the money goes towards helping those children in need, and their parents.

Mr. Prue: If only that were so. Every single month, you take \$120 per poor child and you keep that money and spend it on something else. You do not give it to the families who need it, and those poor children cannot afford to eat healthy fruits and vegetables which you go around telling them they should be eating.

Today at Queen’s Park we welcomed the Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition, ISARC. Once again,

they are disappointed that you refuse to end the egregious clawback of money that will help kids to live better and eat more healthy foods.

Minister, some of those people are here today in the audience. Tell these delegates from ISARC that you care about the health of the poorest children, and declare war on poverty, not Twinkies. Will you end the clawback now?

Hon. Mrs. Meilleur: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): I think it really is beneath the member opposite to diminish the initiatives that we take in our schools and across our government to change the culture around kids and healthy eating, and I think part of that is what goes on in our schools.

The nutritional guidelines we've put in place, the 20 minutes of mandatory physical activity which we've put \$10 million towards—it's not just a guideline; we've actually put money into the system to allow schools to have the equipment they need. We have \$8.5 million annually for nutrition programs in our schools. We've doubled the money for nutrition programs.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The member for Hamilton East will come to order.

Hon. Ms. Wynne: Our schools are part of a community of care for our children, and what we've done is we have doubled the amount of money in our schools for children for nutrition programs. What that means is that kids who come to school hungry are getting food in the school.

There's a culture shift that has to happen around kids' awareness of what they should be eating. That's part of what we're doing to help all children across the province, and the third party should be supportive of that.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): My question is to the Minister of Health Promotion. Minister, during constituency week you came to visit some eastern Ontario communities such as Cornwall and Alexandria.

In Cornwall, you made a very important announcement: your ministry's investment in the Eastern Ontario Health Unit. The Eastern Ontario Health Unit is responsible for the promotion and protection of our citizens' health and well-being. It employs over 150 people across several local county offices in eastern Ontario communities, including my riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

Minister, has your Ministry of Health Promotion reached out to assist these dedicated health professionals?

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): It's appropriate that that question is asked on the 20th anniversary of the World Health Organization's Ottawa charter, because what the Ottawa charter talked about was the importance of putting more resources on the front end of the health care spectrum, preventing illness

and promoting wellness. That's exactly why Premier McGuinty created this ministry just a little over a year ago.

I was very delighted to be in Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde's riding to announce \$33,000 in communities in action fund funding. This is a program that goes to help increase physical activity rates throughout the province.

We also announced \$85,000 through our ministry's heart health program that's going to go to improve walking trails in the community, implementing the Eat Smart! program in restaurants in eastern Ontario and promoting workplace wellness.

I want to congratulate the Eastern Ontario Health Unit. I want to thank my colleagues Jim Brownell and Jean-Marc Lalonde for their tireless effort to make sure that those communities in eastern Ontario get their fair share of the communities in action fund and heart health funding from the government of Ontario.

Mr. Lalonde: We always enjoy having you visit in our riding.

Minister, I am extremely pleased to be part of a government that understands the need of Ontario's eastern and rural communities. Your recent announcement of support will help the local branches of the Eastern Ontario Health Unit, particularly those in Alexandria, Hawkesbury, Winchester, Casselman and Rockland.

Minister, I was happy to see the efforts of our health unit with respect to smoking prevention and cessation rewarded with the Heather Crowe Award. Can you outline what resources have been made available to the Eastern Ontario Health Unit to implement the landmark Smoke-Free Ontario Act?

Hon. Mr. Watson: I was very pleased to meet with Dr. Robert Bourdeau, the chief medical officer of health, who for so many years has done great work in eastern Ontario's health unit. When we brought in the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, we recognized that we couldn't simply go to the old ways of downloading costs and responsibilities, so we in fact, through this government and through the finance ministry, have provided \$512,000 for enforcement, education and cessation programs on smoke-free Ontario for the Eastern Ontario Health Unit.

I'm pleased to report that just a few days ago a survey came out that showed 53% of smokers have made efforts to quit since the implementation of the smoke-free Ontario strategy. We know that smoking kills 16,000 people prematurely in the province of Ontario. We know the cost to the economy is \$2.6 billion in lost productivity and, finally, \$1.7 billion in costs to the health care system. I'm proud of the Eastern Ontario Health Unit and the work they've done on a proactive basis—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. New question.

CONSIDERATION OF BILL 107

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark—Carleton): My question is to the Premier. During the last election in a platform document, Government that Works for You,

you promised, "We will require public hearings for all major legislation."

Mr. Premier, we've had probably five or 10 pieces of legislation which I would consider major during the last three years. I consider Bill 107 as one of those major pieces of legislation. Do you consider Bill 107 a major piece of legislation?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Attorney General.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): We have had public hearings. Let me say it again: We have had public hearings, and we're having more committee hearings, and we're having more debate on this.

I know that there was no bill under the Harris-Eves government that dealt with human rights reform. I understand that. There weren't any public hearings on that when the member was in that government. They didn't bring any such bill before the House; we have brought this bill before the House.

The member knows very well that at some point after there's debate and committee hearings, there's a time when the views are well known, there are times when the positions are well established and there is an opportunity for members of this House to come in fully informed. Nobody can suggest that they are not fully informed on issues around the human rights system and have an opportunity to vote on this. That is the opportunity that we have with this bill and that is the opportunity the members of this House will have when it comes to this Legislature for a vote.

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Mr. Sterling: All of us in this Legislature, save and except for the Attorney General, perhaps, can say that we are not informed, because the amendments to this legislation have not been shown by the Attorney General to the committee or to this Legislature. How can you cut off the process? How can you cut off the process, Mr. Premier? How can you cut off the process when all of the facts are not on the table? Will you, at the very least, postpone the guillotine motion to be debated tonight until after the Attorney General puts the amendments on the table so everyone knows what they're dealing with? Is that not a most reasonable request?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: This is coming from a government House leader past who was the captain of closure motions when he had the opportunity. Seriously, I have great respect for the member asking the question, and I find it hard to believe that the member seriously thinks that the calls for reform to the human rights system that are before this House have not been before this House for many years. The member knows very well that when he was the House leader, the government would never show up at committee hearings and propose the amendments, as this government has done. We've proposed the amendments; we've put them before the House. I would like to hear feedback from the member as to what he thinks of the amendments. Of course we will file the amendments in accordance with the rules; of course we will file the amendments in accordance with the standing orders. But

we went one step further: We provided them in advance. This is all just smoke and mirrors. This is an effort to try and derail a bill that deserves to come to this House for an up-or-down vote once and for all so we can reform this human rights—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. New question.

HOSPITAL GOVERNANCE

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Minister of Health. Mr. Minister, in June 2006, a group of Scarborough residents called the Coalition of Communities to Save the Grace attended the Scarborough Hospital's annual general meeting, only to have their voices silenced. They claim that the Scarborough Hospital's board of directors barred residents from voting for the hospital board despite their being members in good standing of the hospital corporation.

Minister, you promised to democratize local hospitals and make them accountable to the communities they serve. What are you doing to address the concerns of Scarborough's coalition of communities?

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I have been working very closely with my colleagues from Scarborough on issues of importance with respect to hospital services there. Indeed, I had the privilege of attending quite recently the groundbreaking for the new emergency room at Scarborough General with several of my colleagues and indicated at that time my awareness of some of the concerns that were being raised in the community and my willingness to be back in the community, specifically around Scarborough Grace, to listen well and to work on point to address some of the concerns that were raised. I must confess, I haven't had that one-on-one opportunity yet, but I can tell the honourable member that Scarborough hospitals are very much on my agenda, and I look forward to an opportunity of being engaged with members of the local community to discuss more what we can do to assure them at heart that those facilities that they know and love have very bright futures indeed.

Mr. Prue: Mr. Minister, I thank you for the response, but these Scarborough residents—who are behind you today up in the gallery; they are here in the gallery—have been asking to meet with you since July to absolutely no avail. They simply want to be involved in the decision-making process. They've repeatedly contacted your office for assistance and nothing has come of that.

Mr. Minister, you claim that democracy at hospitals is important. Will you agree to investigate the alleged anti-democratic activities at the Scarborough Hospital as the coalition of communities has asked? Will you make that commitment to the people in the gallery today?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: With respect, I say, first off, I have recommitted to the willingness to meet. There is regrettably a longer list sometimes of those wishing to meet than time slots available, but I am committed to

doing so. I'm committed to doing so because my colleagues from Scarborough and I have long since been working with a view towards addressing some of the concerns that linger related to the alignment of hospital services and administration in the Scarborough communities. If the matter of governance is one of those that people would like to discuss, I'd be very open to it.

At the heart of it, here in Ontario we have community-based governance which allows each of our 154 distinct hospital corporations to have degrees of engagement with the local community. They are considerably different. I'd be very, very happy to look at what we can learn from the circumstances in Scarborough. At the heart of it, I assure the honourable member and, through the Legislature, these individuals that I'll be very keen to sit down with them, as I have with my members from Scarborough, with a view toward enhancing the quality of services and giving confidence about the services that are available at Scarborough hospitals.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. As we approach the winter months, Ontario farmers are evaluating the results of their last harvest and starting to think about the next planting season. Today's local newspaper, the Standard Freeholder, reported that many farmers in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh are out in their fields on this very day, at this very moment, taking advantage of the weather to pull in as much of their crops as possible.

However, as the price of grains and oilseeds continues to fluctuate, these farmers have concerns about the long-term sustainability of their operations. Some factors that affect prices are out of their control and are, to a large extent, unpredictable. All the same, they still must plan for next year and the years following.

Minister, can you tell us what this government is doing to help Ontario farmers create sustainable plans in light of produce price fluctuations?

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): That's a good question.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): Yes, it is a very good question, but we always get good questions from our colleague from Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh. He's a great advocate for the agriculture industry.

I just want to share with the members of this House what our government is doing. We're very much looking forward to participating in discussions about the next agriculture policy framework. There's going to be a pillar in that framework to deal with income support. But I want to say that when that framework first came to my ministry for consideration, the federal government did not have any consideration for income support. There were going to be no consultations.

Before I went to Calgary last week to talk with my federal and provincial counterparts, I wrote to the federal minister and my provincial counterparts and said that income support absolutely had to be a part of those discussions. I'm very thankful that with the support of my provincial colleagues now, with the consultations that will be coming out from the federal government, there will be an opportunity for our producers to give them their opinion on how we can improve income support for farmers in Ontario.

PETITIONS

HEALTH PREMIUMS

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas, according to the Department of National Defence, there are over 30,000 serving military personnel calling Ontario home; and

"Whereas, according to the most recent census data, there are more than 1.6 million senior citizens over the age of 65 living in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario plans on eliminating this illegitimate tax for all Ontarians after it forms the government in 2007; and

"Whereas, as an interim measure, the illegitimate health tax should be removed from those who protect Canada and those who have built Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, call on the government of Ontario to immediately eliminate the illegitimate health tax, beginning with serving military personnel and senior citizens."

I've also signed this.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to request that the late show I had scheduled for this evening be rescheduled for next Tuesday, November 28, to coincide with the availability of the Minister of Energy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Yakabuski has requested that it be deferred, and it's agreed.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the government of Ontario's health insurance plan covers treatments for one form of macular degeneration (wet), and there are other forms of macular degeneration (dry) that are not covered,

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the government of Ontario as follows:

"There are thousands of Ontarians who suffer from macular degeneration, resulting in loss of sight if treatment is not pursued. Treatment costs for this disease are astronomical for most individuals and add a financial burden to their lives. Their only alternative is loss of sight. We believe the government of Ontario should cover treatment for all forms of macular degeneration through the Ontario health insurance program."

I affix my name in full support.

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FAIR ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly with regard to access to trades and professions in Ontario. I'd especially like to thank Tarzia Ahmed and Paula Arruda, both of Mississauga, for their efforts in collecting the signatures. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

"Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent, arbitrary and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

"Whereas action by Ontario's trades and professions could remove many such barriers, but Ontario's trades and professions have failed to recognize that such structural barriers exist, much less to take action to remove them, and to provide fair, timely, transparent and cost-effective access to trades and professions for new Canadians trained outside Canada;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario Legislative Assembly urge the members of all parties to swiftly pass Bill 124, the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006, and to require Ontario's regulated professions and trades to review and modify their procedures and qualification requirements to swiftly meet the needs of Ontario's employers, Ontario's newcomers and their own membership, all of whom desperately need the very skills new Canadians bring working for their organizations, for their trades and professions, and for their families."

This is an excellent petition. I'm pleased to sign and support it and to ask page Eshan to carry it.

PROSTATE CANCER

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham, which reads as follows:

"Whereas prostate specific antigen (PSA) tests are frequently used to screen patients for prostate conditions, including cancer; and

"Whereas there is currently a double standard because men usually pay to have a PSA test as part of a routine medical examination, while women have all cancer screening tests covered by OHIP;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, urge the province of Ontario to review its policy on funding PSA testing for men with a view to including this as a service wholly covered by OHIP."

I'm pleased to sign this in support of the petitioners and present it to Simon.

FAIR ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have a petition on access to trades and professions in Ontario. I want to thank the staff and clients of the Peel Multicultural Council, of Mississauga, for this petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

"Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent, arbitrary and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

"Whereas action by Ontario's trades and professions could remove many such barriers, but Ontario's trades and professions have failed to recognize that such structural barriers exist, much less to take action to remove them, and to provide fair, timely, transparent and cost-effective access to trades and professions for new Canadians trained outside Canada;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario Legislative Assembly urge the members of all parties to swiftly pass Bill 124, the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006, and to require Ontario's regulated professions and trades to review and modify their procedures and qualification requirements to swiftly meet the needs of Ontario's employers, Ontario's newcomers and their own membership, all of whom desperately need the very skills new Canadians bring working for their organizations, for their trades and professions, and for their families."

I agree with this petition. I will affix my signature to it and give it to page Ian.

FREDERICK BANTING HOMESTEAD

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Sir Frederick Banting was the man who discovered insulin and was Canada's first Nobel Prize recipient; and

"Whereas this great Canadian's original homestead, located in the town of New Tecumseth, is deteriorating and in danger of destruction because of the inaction of the Ontario Historical Society; and

"Whereas the town of New Tecumseth has been unsuccessful in reaching an agreement with the Ontario Historical Society to use part of the land to educate the public about the historical significance of the work of Sir Frederick Banting;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Culture endorse Simcoe-Grey MPP Jim Wilson's private member's bill entitled the Frederick Banting Homestead Preservation Act so that the homestead is kept in good repair and preserved for generations to come."

I agree with this petition, obviously, and I sign it. I want to thank the Toronto Sun for doing a full-page story on this, a week ago Sunday.

FAIR ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I have a petition.

"In Support of Skilled Immigrants—Bill 124

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government is committed to establishing measures that will break down barriers for Ontario newcomers; and

"Whereas these measures will ensure that the 34 regulatory professions in Ontario have admissions and application practices that are fair, clear and open; and

"Whereas these measures will include the establishment of a fairness commissioner and an access centre for internationally trained individuals; and

"Whereas, through providing a fair and equitable system, newcomers will be able to apply their global experience, which will not only be beneficial to their long-term career goals but also to the Ontario economy as a whole;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"That all members of the House support the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006, Bill 124, and work to ensure its prompt passage in the Ontario Legislature."

I agree with this position and I will send this to the table with Mackenzie.

HIGHWAY 26

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I'll be quick.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the redevelopment of Highway 26 was approved by MPP Jim Wilson and the previous PC government in 2000; and

"Whereas a number of horrific fatalities and accidents have occurred on the old stretch of Highway 26; and

"Whereas the redevelopment of Highway 26 is critical to economic development and job creation in Simcoe-Grey;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government stop the delay of the Highway 26 redevelopment and act immediately to ensure that the project is finished on schedule, to improve safety for area residents and provide economic development opportunities and job creation in Simcoe-Grey."

Of course, I agree with that petition, and I want to thank page Sarah B. for bringing it to the table.

FAIR ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly regarding access to trades and professions in Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

"Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent, arbitrary and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario Legislative Assembly urge the members of all parties to swiftly pass Bill 124, the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006."

I'm pleased to attach my signature.

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario proposes to make Highway 401 improvements from 0.5 km west of Regional Road 8 to 0.5 km east of Regional Road 24 ... which includes short-term improvements ... primarily consisting of widening the 401 ... from six to eight lanes, installing high-mast illumination along the outside lanes of the ... 401, and mid- to long-term improvements ... primarily consisting of widening the ... 401 from eight to 10 lanes; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation/Ministry of the Environment noise protocol indicates that the Ministry of Transportation would consider noise mitigation if there is a 5 dBA increase in sound levels and the sound level is greater than 55 dBA; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation noise policy QST A-1 indicates that candidate sites for noise barrier retrofit must be in a noise-sensitive area next to a provincial freeway, must be ground-level outdoor leisure areas and residential properties, must have average noise levels of more than 60 dBA, and barrier implementation must be on MTO right-of-way and provide a reduction in noise of at least 5 dBA; and

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"Whereas the city of Cambridge official plan amendment ... 1981-2001, in a sound level field test results report dated June 7, 1990, by Norbert Friedel, P.Eng., on the location of a site for a proposed Automation Tooling Systems plant on Royal York Road which was eventually constructed, found that 'Royal Oak Road and Speedville Road (across from Arriscraft plant) had noise level readings of 65-75 dBA with no traffic in the vicinity, approximately 450 feet from the proposed site noise level readings of 55-65 dBA from ambient noise from Highway 401 and Royal Oak Road and in front of site on Royal Oak Road (30 feet from Royal Oak Road) noise reading levels of 60-90 dBA, and that sound level increased and decreased with traffic and trucks were the greatest source of noise'; and ...

"Whereas the undersigned find the 'modelling' study completed by URS Canada Inc. for the Ministry of Transportation to be inadequate and ill-advised, in attempting to address the concerns of the undersigned and the real conditions and consequences of the proposed improvements to Highway 401; and

"Whereas the opportunity to improve the safety and effectiveness of Highway 401 in the area proposed can also remediate air quality concerns, light pollution problems and escalating noise and health concerns, and can best be accomplished in terms of cost and access ... ;

"Therefore, the citizens of Ontario included in the undersigned request that the government of Ontario address the concerns arising from this expansion of Highway 401, which adversely affects the quality of life of the undersigned with respect to air quality, light pollution and noise levels, and request of its government ministries and agents to take steps and measures to alleviate the problems to improve the living conditions of the undersigned."

As I agree with that petition, I sign my name too.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the parents of St. Paul's elementary school in Alliston have raised many issues regarding the security, cleanliness and state of repair of their school; and

"Whereas a 2003 condition assessment completed by the Ontario government identified the need for \$1.8 million in repairs to St. Paul's elementary school; and

"Whereas the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board has approached the Ministry of Education

with the intention of having the school deemed prohibitive to repair as they believe the school requires \$2.28 million in repairs, or 84% of the school replacement cost; and

"Whereas there are ongoing concerns with air quality, heating and ventilation, electrical, plumbing, lack of air conditioning and the overall structure of the building, including cracks from floor to ceiling, to name a few;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Education immediately deem St. Paul's elementary school prohibitive to repair, secure immediate funding and begin construction of a new facility so that the children of St. Paul's can be educated in a facility that is secure and offers them the respect and dignity that they deserve."

I agree with this petition, and I want to thank Milva Biffis and Gaynor McLeary for sending it to me. I'd just note again that my mother taught at the school for 33 years and I went to school there.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the McGuinty government realizes that schools cannot only be places of education but the centre and heartbeat of a community; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government is committed to the education and the future prosperity of Ontario's students; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government is committed to a safe and healthy environment for all Ontario's students; and

"Whereas a good work and learning environment improves productivity and creativity; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government has invested \$1 billion in funding the construction of new schools;

"We, the undersigned, applaud the McGuinty government for protecting and enhancing the learning environment of all Ontario's students, ensuring the future potential of children all across this province."

I agree with this petition, I affix my signature to it and I give it to page Shannon, who's here with me today.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I have petitions provided to me by Pharmacy on Main and Preston Medical Pharmacy in the city of Cambridge:

"Whereas the McGuinty government passed the Transparent Drug System for Patients Act; and

"Whereas, as a result of the regulations under the act, generic drug companies are required to supply drugs at the cost prescribed by the government; and

"Whereas the pharmacists are required to purchase the drugs at prices set by the generic companies and the government's new formulary does not fully reimburse pharmacists for the cost of those drugs; and

"Whereas the government has removed the 'cost to operator' provisions; and

"Whereas the pharmacists are forced to either lose money or bill patients for the actual cost of the drugs; and

"Whereas the viability of small and independent pharmacists is being threatened through the government's actions by regulation; and

"Whereas many pharmacies in smaller cities, towns and villages in Ontario rely on manufacturers' rebates to remain economically viable and the government is proceeding to abolish those rebates;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the McGuinty government immediately reinstate manufacturers' rebates and return to the 'cost to operator' provision, thereby guaranteeing affordable access to medications for all patients."

As I agree with this petition, I affix my name to it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

REPORT, INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

RAPPORT, COMMISSAIRE À L'INTÉGRITÉ

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move that the Legislative Assembly accept the report of the Integrity Commissioner dated October 25, 2006, and approve the recommendation contained therein.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to make a few brief comments on what I think is a very important matter that I think may have received less attention from all of us than it should, not so much because of the particular facts of the matter or because of the particular finding of the Integrity Commissioner in this case with respect to those facts, but rather with respect to a much broader principle that he spoke to in the reasons that accompany his decision in this matter.

I should say at the outset that I had the privilege of getting to know Mrs. Russo very well in the course of her travails. She's a person of immense courage. In fact, I was one of the honorary chairs of her walk last year to raise money for people with a disability caused by the kinds of circumstances in which she found herself. I should say as well that the commissioner, in writing his report, acknowledged that the member for Leeds-Grenville, in the comments he made inside and outside the House, said that Mrs. Russo deserved to be compensated, and furthermore, the Integrity Commissioner went on to say, in making his findings, that he said it within the context of, and I quote his words, "however well-intentioned or well-intended the comments of the member for Leeds-Grenville may have been."

But it's not my place to stand here and really deal with any of that. It is to deal with something that I think we

have to, and I think we run the risk, even in having a motion as simple as the one moved a moment ago by my friend the government House leader, of accepting as precedent, as what I'll call law or the rules as they should apply or convention going forward, the principle that seems to be embodied in the Integrity Commissioner's reasons; namely, that we are going to accept the regime pursuant to which a member of this Legislature in fact has fewer rights within the context of their role as MPP outside the House to speak about matters pertaining to things that are going on inside the justice system. I think that is a very serious matter.

I happen to personally believe that the Integrity Commissioner, with the greatest of respect to that honourable gentleman, may have overstepped his bounds in making that kind of apparent ruling as to how the rules inside this House with regard to sub judice impact or don't impact on the rights of MPPs to say whatever they wish to say outside the House. As we all know, there are very clear rules in place under the common law with respect to sub judice that apply to all citizens. There are further rules, for example, that apply to me and to other members of this House as members of the Law Society of Upper Canada, part of the rules of professional conduct that deal with what you're allowed and not allowed to say with respect to matters that are before the court inside public office and outside the Legislature.

But the notion that you would create a different class of citizen when you walk out of this House and suggest that somehow there are potentially two sets of rules that apply to members of provincial Parliament, one that applies to all other citizens and the other that in effect imposes some sort of external application of a parliamentary convention on MPPs with respect to their freedom to comment on these matters to the media and otherwise is certainly something that warrants considerable discussion and doesn't simply warrant us deciding yea or nay on the acceptance of the Integrity Commissioner's report and the approval of the recommendations therein, because I think there is every opportunity for people to misinterpret that motion, if passed. I have little doubt it will be, given the numbers that apply to most votes taken around here. That will imply that the House—even with those who might choose to vote against it for that reason alone—is condoning or approving this extension of a parliamentary convention to MPPs outside of the House.

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In my view, this is a creation of a different class of citizenship and a different class of freedoms to speak, or more limitations on freedom to speak, to be imposed on members of provincial Parliament outside the House than are imposed on other citizens, when in fact it is those of us who have the privilege of being elected to public office who I would suggest have a higher obligation to make comments, ask questions and respond to questions by the media and others, in respect of matters that are in front of the justice system, because that is a part of what causes our democratic parliamentary and justice systems

to work, that you have people who are active players in this, who understand that there are rules.

It's interesting in this matter that the Speaker in the Legislature, on the day the questions were asked and the comments made, did not make any points or did not call the member for Leeds–Grenville to order, notwithstanding that one might argue that could be done in the context of the sub judice rule as it applies in this House, nor did any judge, including most particularly the presiding judge in the Russo matter—I'll call it the Russo matter, and that wasn't the name of the matter, but the matter affecting Mrs. Russo—comment on or cite Mr. Runciman for contempt, which that judge could have done within the context of the sub judice rule as it applies to all other people including, I would argue, members of provincial Parliament, in terms of restricting the opportunities, as we all are restricted, to commenting on matters in such a way as to not cause contempt of court.

My only purpose in wanting to speak today is that I find it regrettable that the government House leader and the members of the government—and it seems like there are more and more of these matters on which it's occurring; we spent a good part of the afternoon discussing the guillotine that's being administered on the human rights act discussions—don't want to hear from the people who want to be heard. They're breaking their own promises with respect to people who could be heard. It's consistent with a pattern here where there wasn't a willingness to make sure that the wording of this motion could be such that, while we could accept the report—

Interjection.

Mr. Tory: I'll have a chance to speak to that later—while we could accept the report, we, at the same time, could make it very clear that we, as members of provincial Parliament and as members of the Legislative Assembly, could find some other way in which to express, first, our real concern about the apparent precedent and new law—I can call it—that has been set here by the wording that we are, I think, by extension accepting, that the Integrity Commissioner has advanced; and second, that we could have a good, solid opportunity to discuss the very important principle that's involved here with respect to the rights and responsibilities of members of provincial Parliament and that they should certainly be no less than those of other citizens within the context of the sub judice rule outside of this Legislature.

I just wanted to really put those concerns on the record, because I think it is an important matter that is not going to get, in this debate, by the way the government has chosen to handle it in terms of the wording of the motion, the kind of proper discussion it needs and deserves. Frankly, when the Integrity Commissioner comes out with a ruling like this, there really is no avenue pursuant to which members of the Legislature, particularly in light of the way the government has chosen to handle this, can say that we think this is wrong. So we are deemed, I guess, at the end of the day, when this report is accepted and approved, to have accepted the precedent he has established.

I say respectfully, I think he's wrong. I think it's wrong that we should just accept this and move forward on the basis that he's right. I think there should be some place or some way in which we can establish, once and for all, what the rules, rights and responsibilities are as they apply outside of this House to members of provincial Parliament.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–Baie James): Je veux prendre une couple de minutes pour exprimer un peu mes préoccupations avec cette motion et les difficultés que ça donne aux députés et aussi, jusqu'à un certain point, au public.

Tout ça pour dire qu'on a toujours eu des droits, comme députés, d'exprimer une critique contre une politique d'un gouvernement, y compris une critique envers le ministre responsable de la justice dans la province de l'Ontario, comme dans toute autre juridiction au Canada et dans le système britannique qu'on a aujourd'hui.

La difficulté que j'ai, c'est que la décision qui a été écrite par M. Osborne est vraiment bouleversante, dans le sens que ça nous dit que, comme député, une fois que tu sors de l'Assemblée, tu vas avoir moins de droits pour t'exprimer ou donner une critique sur une matière qui fait affaire avec la politique sur la justice que quelqu'un qui est responsable, n'importe qui d'autre dans la société, pour rapporter ce qui se passe dans la politique ontarienne. C'est un peu bizarre que les députés de l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario vont avoir moins de droits pour s'exprimer sur une de ces questions qu'un membre des médias de la province de l'Ontario. Je trouve ça vraiment un peu ridicule.

On comprend que les députés, eux, sont là pour représenter leurs citoyens et citoyennes à l'Assemblée, même hors l'Assemblée, quand ça vient à toutes les matières qui sont devant l'Assemblée envers les politiques de la province de l'Ontario. Ils pourraient être mis dans une position où nous, comme députés, allons avoir moins de droits que n'importe qui dans le public ontarien quand ça vient à critiquer une matière qui fait affaire avec le département de la justice. Je pense que ça ne se tient pas debout. Je trouve ça un peu bouleversant que M. Osborne ait décidé d'écrire une décision de cette manière.

Je me demande s'il y a eu une consultation avec, on va dire, les greffiers de l'Assemblée. Je me demande la question parce que je ne pense pas que les greffiers de l'Assemblée donneraient un avis de prendre cette position envers les responsabilités d'un député et ce qu'un député peut faire hors la Chambre. Comme on le sait, à la Chambre elle-même, on a le droit de s'exprimer sur n'importe quelle question. Il n'y a aucune habileté de la part du Président de l'Assemblée ou des ministres, spécialement des ministres du gouvernement, de réduire notre capacité à représenter les citoyens et citoyennes qu'on représente ou à nous exprimer sur une politique d'un gouvernement provincial. Je pense que ça devient bouleversant qu'on s'en aille dans cette direction-là, parce que, une fois qu'on s'en va dans cette direction, comme ils disent en anglais, "It's a long, slippery slope."

I just wanted to put those few comments on the record. I know that others are going to have something to say about it, but I'll just say it's somewhere that I'm not so sure we really want to go. I wonder why Mr. Osborne decided to go this way, because certainly we're now put in a position where a talk show host, a reporter for a paper or whoever would have more rights to express himself on matters of justice outside of the assembly than a member of the assembly. I find that highly troubling as a member and just say to myself that maybe this is one that we need to back away from.

Mr. Mario Sergio (York West): I'd like to address the House on this particular issue, first of all addressing the person herself, Louise Russo. Then, if I'm privileged to, I'll have a few more minutes and I'd like to deal with the other side of the case. But the most important part of the case is Louise Russo.

I have had the pleasure of knowing Louise for many years as a resident of my community, and I remember that very vividly from a PTA meeting at one of the local schools. She is still in so many ways very bubbly, as she used to be. But that was before, when she was very actively engaged as a local resident, a participant, a mother and a community activist. She was bubbly, she was happy, she was looking after her family and after herself.

On April 24, 2004, she became the innocent victim of brutality. I think we as legislators have to pay attention here to those people who are victimized unjustly not because of our fault or their own fault, but because of the fault of others. Unfortunately at that time, that happy and bubbly person came to a brutal halt. Of course, when that happened, there was a process and justice was done, if you will, in some ways, where the culprits, the perpetrators, were justly arraigned, taken to court and whatever, and justice was sought for Ms. Russo. I don't think any member of the House can dispute that.

1550

I think the dispute we are talking about today is not necessarily how much and what was said; it is how it was said. For Ms. Russo, I have to say, it's very painful. As individual members, we often say when tragedy occurs to a family member or a friend or a relative, "I know how you feel." Let me say that we don't. We can't. In this particular case, only Louise Russo knows how she feels. We can sympathize, we can share in her pain in her loss—in her family's loss, not only for Louise herself—that now she's relegated to a wheelchair for the rest of her life. To compound the problem, she is no longer able to look after herself, her family, and especially a child who requires attention 24 hours around the clock. This is the tragedy.

What we say sometimes in this House, we may say for a number of reasons, often by our own mistakes not necessarily that we mean what we say. And there are times when not inadvertently but with full knowledge of our actions, and this is the problem. This is why we are here today and I hope we can learn from this so it will never happen again. I feel that what's happening here,

even with our debate, is that we are hurting even more someone who is down and is in pain at a time when we should extend our hand and say, "How can we make this pain less, alleviate it?" We tend to push them down regardless of their own feelings. After all, I believe that every member of this House is here with the full intent to help those who cannot help themselves or to help those when they are in need of help.

In our case, we have failed. In some ways, we have failed Ms. Russo, and she knows, and we should realize that she's hurting. Instead of dealing with the issue, at times politics come into the picture and, yes, I can sympathize with that as well because we are in this House. But we have to understand that besides politics there is another issue, there are other people, and we have to be very much aware of how we deal with people's issues.

Very briefly, let me say that when the report came down from the Integrity Commissioner, the Honourable Coulter Osborne, it ruled. Some may not agree. The member for Leeds–Grenville may not agree. But it's quite clear. There is no doubt as to the answer that we got from Commissioner Osborne: that the member for Leeds–Grenville violated the Members' Integrity Act when he tried to influence court proceedings related to Louise Russo. The Integrity Commissioner ruled that Mr. Runciman's statements were a clear violation of the Members' Integrity Act and were intended to influence the criminal proceeding in Ms. Russo's case.

When asked by reports on April 6, 2006, if he was attempting to influence the court in the case, Mr. Runciman said, "I know that the defence lawyer, when I talked to him yesterday, was very concerned that it would jeopardize the deal. My bottom line is ... that this deal has to be jeopardized. It has to be thrown out."

As I said before, it's not what has been said, it's how it has been said, and this is more painful.

Ms. Russo's attorney is quoted: "MPP Runciman, a former Solicitor General, is attempting to seriously interfere with the administration of justice in relation to a matter pending before the courts. This is causing great distress to Ms. Russo. At this moment, she feels she is at risk of being further victimized if Mr. Runciman further interferes with the prosecution of the accused."

My time is quickly up and as much as I would like to say, let me sum up with this: I have been in this House a short period of time compared to the member from Leeds–Grenville. In this House we know Mr. Runciman as a very capable, honourable person, a member of this House. Again, as such, I would call on him, for the benefit of every member of this House and for the benefit of Louise Russo, that he would find the courage to stand up in the House and say, "I said what I have said, but I'd like to deeply apologize for the further pain that I have inflicted upon Ms. Russo." I would kindly ask the member from Leeds–Grenville to do just that so that Ms. Russo would feel perhaps a bit of a lessened burden to know that we do have a heart. We do have a heart, and I would hope that Mr. Runciman, knowing that he is

honourable, would indeed stand today in the House and say, "I so apologize, not necessarily for what I said, but how I said it." I would hope that indeed he will do that.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): My comments are not going to be lengthy since I am the named individual. I don't think it would be appropriate to carry on at length, because as well there are a number of my colleagues who wish to participate in this very important discussion.

I think all of us know that this is by nature a very partisan place, and we can't escape that. But I think it is unfortunate that on occasions such as this we can't look beyond the partisan issues and look at some of the bigger questions, and look down the road with respect to implications for all members currently resident in this place and resident in this place in the future as well. I think that those are the concerns, really, that the opposition parties are focusing on.

The government, for reasons known best to its members, has opted not to find a middle ground here with respect to this report. Receiving the report, they apparently, if you listen to the previous speaker in terms of demanding an apology, feel there's some political gain to be made by pursuing that avenue. That, again, I think is unfortunate.

For those of you who are not sure what this is all about, Louise Russo, as indicated, was the victim of a botched mob hit. Contract killers attempting to murder someone shot Ms. Russo and, as a result of that, she is now a paraplegic. During a plea-bargaining process Ms. Russo was offered significant compensation. My concern was surrounding the precedent and policy of negotiating with the perpetrators of the crime, people who have the wherewithal, but where that wherewithal comes from—no one really knew where those monies were coming from. We just knew they were coming from organized crime. I felt and continue to feel that I had an obligation as an official opposition critic to express my concerns about the implications of that policy both within the chamber and outside.

1600

What this boils down to is the rights of members of the Legislature. We all know that within the chamber and within the committees we have immunity. That's a well-known fact. I think most of the public know that, within certain limitations, we can get up in this place and say virtually anything, and we don't have to worry about being sued. We can make some pretty bad accusations—and over the years we've heard some pretty unfortunate accusations—and from across the floor they say, "Say that outside. Say that outside." Of course, they know that if we say it outside, we're open for legal action. So immunity is what is afforded us in this place and in committees. What kind of limitation can be placed on that?

That leads us to what this is all about, something called the sub judice convention, which allows the speaker—if you get up and make some comment which is beyond the pale and could perhaps be interfering with

a court case—at the time to indicate such and invoke, if you will, the sub judice rule. What Justice Osborne has done with his report is extend that rule, that convention, to you and me, Mr. Speaker, and all other members of this House once we walk through those doors. He's saying that that rule is going to apply to you and me as MPPs once we step through that door. It doesn't apply to radio talk show hosts who on this day were taking the same position. That kind of restriction doesn't apply to any other citizen of Ontario.

In reality, when we have stepped out the door, if we say something that's inappropriate or could in fact jeopardize a matter before the courts, we're subject to legal action. We could be sued. We could be taken before the courts, with obviously the possibility of electoral defeat because of what we say as well. So there's a whole range of considerations which Mr. Justice Osborne apparently didn't take into consideration. If he did, he hasn't provided us with explanations as to the rationale behind his conclusions.

I raised this point in a statement following the receipt of his report, that he had offered no substantiation. I referenced Erskine May, Montpetit and others, who have very clearly said that sub judice only applies inside the House and within its committees as a restraint on immunity. Subsequent to that, we have done a little bit of research and we can find no other parliamentary jurisdiction in the world that applies sub judice to its members outside this chamber.

If they can get beyond the partisan rhetoric, this should concern each and every member of this assembly. They think there are points to be scored here by going after a member of the opposition, the House leader of the official opposition. They think this is a political game, I guess, and that, again, is truly unfortunate.

I indicated in my statement in the House when the report was received that I have great respect for Justice Osborne, but to the extent his ruling suggests limits on the rights of legislators to exercise oversight, I will not accept that and I don't believe the members of the opposition in both parties will accept that. Because of the failure to find a compromise, what appears to be happening—and I'm not sure how many of these reports have been tabled in this place, but I do feel comfortable in saying that I don't believe we've ever had both opposition parties reject a report. That is going to happen today. Both opposition parties are united in their concerns about the implications of the recommendations that cannot be adopted. In my view, if both opposition parties do vote against it in a united voice, that renders the report moot. That's regrettable, and I think it reflects badly on the office. But the government, in its lack of wisdom, decided that it would rather pursue a political avenue than the appropriate and right avenue in terms of implications for all members of this assembly.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I'm not pleased, by any stretch of the imagination, to see this debate taking place. It is always a regrettable thing when a member attracts the sanction of the Integrity Com-

missioner. But this chamber, this Legislature, has a responsibility, a duty pursuant to the Members' Integrity Act when a report like the latest report by the Integrity Commissioner concerning, in this instance, Mr. Runciman, is tabled. The obligation pursuant to section 34, in response to the October 25, 2006, report of the Integrity Commissioner, is to "consider and respond to the report within 30 days after the day the report is laid before it."

Let's make something very clear: It's an obligation of the assembly. Let's make something very clear: There is no judicial review available to a person about whom the Integrity Commissioner has ruled. The Integrity Commissioner makes both findings of fact and a determination as to whether or not that member violated the Members' Integrity Act—broke the law, if you will. The consequences that can be imposed by the Integrity Commissioner, without access to judicial review by a given member, can include the vacation of a member's seat, removing a member from the Legislative Assembly, contradicting the wishes of the electorate and that member's riding. That, needless to say, is an incredibly serious consequence, perhaps even more so for his or her voters than it is for the member himself or herself.

There's no judicial review. Should there be, however regrettable, an error on the part of the Integrity Commissioner in the determination of the facts which lead him or her—in this case, him—to the finding that there has been a violation of the act, there's no opportunity for the member to review that. Should there be an error on the part of the commissioner as to whether or not a member violated the act, there is no recourse by way of judicial review for that member. His or her recourse is to this assembly.

Parliaments have been referred to as "the highest court" over and over and over again. I found it interesting reading the Supreme Court of Canada decision in *House of Commons v. Vaid*, an issue around privilege—irrelevant, quite frankly, to this particular matter—wherein the court declared, "It is a wise principle that the courts and Parliament strive to respect each other's role in the conduct of public affairs. Parliament, for its part, refrains from commenting on matters before the courts under the sub judice rule." Parliament refrains from commenting on the matters before the courts under the sub judice rule. "The courts, for their part, are careful not to interfere with the workings of Parliament." This, of course, is a declaration made by that court in 2005.

It's interesting, because there are numerous other references to the fact that while the courts would prefer not to comment on the actions of Parliament, they may do so from time to time, and while Parliaments may prefer not to have to refer to the conduct of courts, they do so from time to time. In this instance, this is the court. This is the review. This is the judicial—as judicial as it's going to get—review of the determination of Judge Osborne.

1610

I want to say very clearly that New Democrats will not vote for—indeed, will oppose—the resolution before the House now, and let me tell you why.

I want to thank the government House leader, because the government House leader truly, during the course of a considerable number of days now, worked with House leaders from the other two parties here in an effort to draft wording for a resolution that would permit opposition members to support the resolution.

Let's understand very carefully what this motion says. The motion very clearly says, "That the Legislative Assembly accept the report of the Integrity Commissioner." It was noted by all of us that in earlier motions the word "adopt" had been used. In this instance, the word "accept" is incorporated, apparently as an alternative to "adopt." But I put to you that "accept," by virtue of the Canadian Oxford Dictionary, second edition, a particular favourite of mine, means "consent to receive." It also means "give an affirmative answer to ... regard favourably; treat as welcome ... approve for admission ... believe, receive, recognize (an opinion, explanation, etc.) as adequate or valid ... be prepared to subscribe to (a belief, philosophy, etc.)"

New Democrats are not prepared to adopt this report; we are not prepared to accept this report. We believe that the report and the conclusions are based on a very significant and substantial error in what constitutes the sub judice convention or rule and, more importantly, as to what constitutes sub judice in terms of parliamentarians here in the province of Ontario. It concerns us that the Integrity Commissioner very boldly states—I'm referring to page 8 of his report—"What was said" by Mr. Runciman "in my view, constitutes a clear violation of the sub judice rule, which is part of parliamentary convention as that term is referred to in the Members' Integrity Act."

We submit that Mr. Osborne is wrong in that conclusion. We can neither accept nor adopt this report. We were prepared to receive the report. We think that is entirely appropriate. Our concern—my concern, my colleagues' concern in the New Democratic Party—is that this assembly will do itself and its successors great danger by accepting this report with all of the implications that that has.

I don't care whether you like or dislike Mr. Runciman. I don't care whether you like or dislike what he had to say with reference to the publicized and anticipated plea bargain that was being negotiated. But I say to you that he, having said it outside of this chamber, was not in contravention of the parliamentary sub judice convention or rule or of our standing orders, and I'm going to speak to that before I'm finished.

Mr. Runciman is a long-time member of this assembly. He was a cabinet minister in two different Conservative governments—

Mr. Runciman: Three.

Mr. Kormos: Three in total—and a Solicitor General. I've worked with him here for 19 years. Throughout my association with him, he has been, and certainly appears to remain, an extremely aggressive and passionate, indeed zealous, advocate for victims' rights. Mr. Runciman has been passionate in his pursuit of government policies—whether they were his own, while he was in

government as a cabinet minister, or the policies of other governments, whether it was New Democrats or Liberals in power—that, in his view, best served the safety of communities and the people living in them.

It may seem particularly attractive today—right now—for government members to want to tie Mr. Runciman to the stake and light the flames at his feet. I say to you, my colleagues, that that partisan zeal could take us down a very unwelcome path.

This is one of the few occasions where members of the assembly are called upon to act in a judicial manner: to set aside partisan differences, to set aside personal animosities and to recognize that, quite frankly, the vote today has nothing to do with Mr. Runciman or his future as a parliamentarian or the political success or non-success of his particular party. It has everything to do with this Parliament creating, for all the wrong reasons, a perversion of the sub judice rule.

There has not been a more serious matter upon which I have been called to vote, in terms of parliamentary procedure, than the matter before us today.

My concern, just as it isn't for Mr. Runciman, isn't for myself. It's for parliamentarians 10 years or 15 years down the road who will become incredibly fettered in the performance of their responsibilities, of their duties, not just to their constituents but to this province and to this chamber, by virtue of this assembly implicitly expanding the sub judice rule to places where it was never intended to go.

I put to you—and let's start looking at the references. I want to express incredible gratitude to the legislative library research, to the Clerk's office for their incredible diligence in gathering background and material, I'm sure not just for me but for everybody who intends to and will speak to this matter who sought that assistance. There has been an exhaustive search of parliamentary jurisdictions in an effort to understand exactly what is this sub judice rule or convention.

1620

I contend that, first of all, it doesn't apply; it simply doesn't apply. It simply doesn't govern conduct by any member outside of the Parliament. Indeed, the British House of Commons committee, which has conducted two exhaustive reviews of sub judice, along with other commentators, has expressed the remarkable irony of the fact that a member has more freedom in the media to speak than he or she does in the chamber. Of course, one of the fundamental premises of parliamentary process is the freedom to speak.

God bless Stanley Knowles, one of the brilliant parliamentarians of this country, and a person who had a true passion for parliamentary process. Stanley Knowles—and I'm referring to the excellent paper written for *The Parliamentarian*, *Journal of the Parliaments of the Commonwealth*, in July 1976 by Philip Laundy, director, research branch, Library of Parliament, Ottawa. Of course, the article is about sub judice. Stanley Knowles, again, one of Canada's great parliamentarians and one of our incredibly valuable and historic—now dead—resources in terms of parliamentary procedure, submitted that

of the two absolutes, freedom of speech is superior to the dictum that there cannot be reference to a matter that is sub judice.

That is consistent with the proposition contained in any number of references that when there is some doubt on the part of the Speaker in determining whether or not something is sub judice, the Speaker ought to determine in favour of freedom of speech. Let's understand what the purpose, the rationale is of the sub judice rule. I'm referring to the most authoritative document—because, let's understand, the sub judice rule has not been codified in the Parliament of Canada. The Parliament relies upon precedent, upon the convention, upon the rule uncoded. I'm going to put to you very clearly that the province of Ontario has codified the sub judice rule and it's in our standing orders. So while references to, if you will, the common law sub judice rule of the Parliament of Canada may be useful, the final word is in the codification, and in just a few minutes I'm going to talk about that and the committee process that gave rise to that back in the 1970s.

The House of Commons Journals, the first report by the special committee on the rights and immunities of members, April 29, 1977—in that you read Montpetit, and that is the reference that Montpetit makes when it talks about the exhaustive, if you will, Canadian review of sub judice. There is a discussion of the rationale. The rationale is clearly that there is an interest in the Parliament not prejudicing the outcome of criminal or civil cases. The discussions, of course, consider the fact that at one point in our history most serious criminal cases were tried by juries. That trend is very much reversed now. So there was an interest in not prejudicing a juror who had to hear a case, not prejudicing or impacting on witnesses who had to testify.

Not interfering with the courts? Please, it was recognized by the Canadian parliamentary committee that, “It is very unlikely that a judge would be influenced by what is said in the House. Presumably, the convention is concerned with the protection of juries and witnesses from undue influence.” And where does the rule apply? I didn't have to bring the text in—I could have brought in photocopies—but it's so nice to be able to read from the actual text. Erskine May, latest edition, 23rd edition, in its discussion of sub judice, makes reference to the British House of Commons select committee, very similar to the select committee that had dealt with the matter and reported to the Parliament in Ottawa:

“That”—this is very important—“subject to the discretion of the Chair”—because that crops up all the time—“and to the right of the House to legislate on any matter..., the House in all its proceedings...”—the House in all its proceedings—“shall apply the following rules and matters of sub judice:

“(1) Cases in which proceedings are active in United Kingdom courts shall not be referred to in any motion, debate or question.”

The sub judice rule, the admonition about referring to matters before the courts, is with respect to motions in the House, debates in the House, questions in the House

and, I put to you, statements in the House; not an interview with a member of the fourth or fifth estate. That's what Erskine May says—absolutely no suggestion that the sub judice convention is anything other than with respect to statements in the House, debates in the House, questions in the House and motions in the House. I, needless to say, don't disagree with Mr. May, and I would suggest that you shouldn't either.

Beauchesne, the most recent edition, 6th edition, under "The Sub-Judice Convention," refers only to sub judice as consideration and reflection and comment upon matters in the House or in the committee, and then makes this reference as well—and hearken back to Stanley Knowles and the discretion of the Speaker—on page 153: "In doubtful cases the Speaker should rule in favour of debate and against the convention." See, it's not a hard and fast rule; it's not a prohibition. I'm not saying it's not a convention, but I'm saying the convention isn't a prohibition. You heard me make reference earlier to the observation that if there's going to be an imbalance, the imbalance has to be on the right of the member to speak, notwithstanding that technically it may be sub judice. Beauchesne: "In doubtful cases the Speaker should rule in favour of debate and against the convention."

1630

This is most interesting, especially when we get to what the province of Ontario did in its legislative committee and in virtue of its own standing orders. Beauchesne, page 154: "The Speaker should interfere with that freedom of speech only in exceptional cases where it is clear that to do otherwise could be harmful to specific individuals." In other words, the Speaker is not to interfere with the speech of the member just because it may or may not be—in this case, obviously, may be—sub judice, but if it's clear that not to interfere would be harmful to specific individuals.

That's the authority. That's the Parliament of Canada, which has not codified the sub judice rule or convention that one errs on the right of members to speak, on the freedom of speech, number one; number two, that when the Speaker does interfere, it should only be in exceptional cases where it is clear that to do otherwise would be harmful to specific individuals. There is no presumption of prejudice. That is clear from what Beauchesne says.

Of course, the most current and readable of all parliamentary procedural references—I love this one. That's Marleau and Montpetit. I should be reading Carl Hiaasen novels at night, but I'm reading Marleau and Montpetit. It has two parts of the book that deal with sub judice.

Page 428, sub judice convention: "This practice is referred to as the sub judice convention and it applies to debate, statements and question period." End of sentence. End of observation. End of commentary. It applies to matters raised and discussed here in the chamber, in the House, in the Parliament. This is very important, because Marleau and Montpetit—that first reference was at page 428. Page 534, with respect to the sub judice rule or convention: "While precedents exist for the guidance of

the Chair, no attempt has ever been made to codify the practice known as the 'sub judice convention.'" In our federal Parliament, there's no codification of the sub judice convention, so it's the precedents and practices.

Having said that, all of the precedents and practices make it clear that the convention only applies to statements made in the House, and furthermore that the Speaker is the final arbiter and that it is only when it is clear to the Speaker that there is prejudice as a result of the statements being made will the Speaker interfere with the freedom of speech, which is a paramount freedom.

In 1978, Norm Sterling was a member of the Legislature of Ontario procedural affairs standing committee. I read the Hansard with fascination. First of all, there were some just brilliant, outstanding members of the Legislature—Mr. Sterling, along with Mr. Renwick, along with Mr. Rotenberg, amongst others—and what they were discussing was the standing orders, those rules which govern us here in the chamber, that govern us as parliamentarians.

If you will, take a look at standing order 1:

"(a) The proceedings in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and in all committees of the assembly shall be conducted according to the following standing orders.

"(b) The purpose of these standing orders is to ensure that proceedings are conducted in a manner that respects the democratic rights of members"—the democratic rights of members—

"(i) to submit motions," etc.

"(ii) to debate, speak to, and vote," etc.

"(iii) to hold the government accountable for its policies; and

"(iv) collectively, to decide matters," etc.

"(c) In all contingencies not provided for in the standing orders the question shall be decided by the Speaker or Chair, and in making the ruling the Speaker or Chair shall base the decision on the democratic rights of members referred to in clause (b). In doing so the Speaker shall have regard to any applicable usages and precedents of the Legislature and Parliamentary tradition."

"In all contingencies not provided for in the standing orders ... the Speaker shall have regard to ... usages and precedents...."

You see, in 1978—Mr. Sterling will remember this well—the standing orders were amended with respect to sub judice here in the province of Ontario. It was a fascinating debate by some very capable parliamentarians. There was consideration of simply abandoning the sub judice consideration as it was in the standing orders at the time. Mr. Michael Breagh: "The second option is probably to eliminate entirely and go simply on convention." So the standing committee on procedural affairs said, "One of our choices could be to eliminate the sub judice consideration of the standing orders and just go on convention."

Further, in discussing the proposed amendments, the Chair says, "I should point out to the members that it is basically the existing rule"—the one referred to by Mr. Breagh as the one that could simply be abandoned so

that we rely on convention. "The basic difference would be that it is shown, to the satisfaction of the Speaker, that further reference would create a real and substantial danger of prejudice to the proceeding." Needless to say, it was that final consideration, that qualifier, that was incorporated by the committee and then adopted by the House so that we now have pleas.

Take a look at standing order 23(g). This is the sub judice rule here in the province of Ontario. Unlike Ottawa, which hasn't codified its rule, we in Ontario have:

"Matters sub judice

"(g) Refers to any matter that is the subject of a proceeding

"(i) that is pending in a court," etc. ... "where it is shown to the satisfaction of the Speaker that further reference would create a real and substantial danger of prejudice to the proceeding."

That language wasn't capricious on the part of members of that committee. They had a whole lot of authority to rely upon in choosing that language. In other words, before the Speaker orders or rules something sub judice, he has to be satisfied that there is "a real and substantial danger of prejudice to the proceeding." That, my friends and colleagues, is the sub judice rule in the province of Ontario. While convention and precedent may be helpful in interpreting and understanding it, it's not convention that prevails; it's the standing order that prevails.

Historically, there has been a fascinating distinction between sub judice in the British context and sub judice in the Canadian context with respect to members of Parliament making reference in the House, indeed questioning the minister responsible, with respect to criminal sentences. This is a very important observation. The British Parliament has been clear that there can be no inquiry during question period, for instance, of the justice minister with respect to sentence.

1640

In Canada, it is noted in a research paper prepared for the Parliament of Canada, dated September 29, 1980—and we're referring here in the context of capital sentences. It's clear as a result of what's noted in Erskine May that the issue of capital sentences cannot be raised in the British Parliament. However, the research paper prepared in 1980, Library of Parliament, states:

"In Canada, the situation seems different. In May 1969, Mr. E. Woolliams (Bow River), referring to the sentence of death passed on Otto Borg from Alberta, who killed an RCMP officer, asked the Solicitor General:

"As the first conviction of capital murder since the new act was passed has been upheld by the Supreme Court of Canada, is it now the policy of the government to apply the royal prerogative and commute that sentence?"

"No point of order was made...."

The minister responded, a supplementary question was asked by the member, and the author of this research study states, "From this example, it seems that the Canadian interpretation of the rule differs from that of Great Britain."

Not only was Mr. Runciman not raising a matter in the Legislature, I submit to you that a matter being raised in the Legislature about the policy of the Attorney General with respect to the direction that it gives its crown attorneys regarding the sentences that they will seek or agree to is an entirely valid question, is not sub judice in the broader sense of sub judice. One, it does not prejudice the case because it doesn't interfere with judicial discretion or comment on judicial discretion whatsoever but, furthermore, appears to be very explicitly approved in the federal Parliament of 1969 when a question was specifically put to the justice minister of the day as to whether or not he would intervene and commute a capital sentence.

If it's not the job of parliamentarians to hold the Attorney General accountable for policies that emanate from within his office, then whose is it? The courts have made it very clear that it's not theirs. That's why I made reference in the very first instance to the Vaid decision in the Supreme Court of Canada, 2005.

The courts administer the law. One, I put to you that it's a standing order that creates sub judice here in the province of Ontario. I put to you that that standing order clearly restricts sub judice to the Legislature and the Parliament and its committees. I put to you that all of the precedent makes it clear that sub judice has never applied outside of Parliament.

Furthermore, I put to you that even if he had raised the matter in the Legislature, the Speaker would have had to determine whether or not his raising the matter prejudiced any of the parties. Mr. Osborne says it's for the Speaker to deal with what happens in the chamber and for him, Mr. Osborne, to deal with what happens outside and somehow, in the course of stating that, assumes that he has the ability to create parliamentary convention where no parliamentary convention existed, to create a standing order where no standing order applies, and I say that that was a serious error, a serious flaw in his conclusions.

I regret that I have only a few more minutes. I have never been as concerned as I am today about the consequences of a vote in this Legislature. We have a Members' Integrity Act that does not permit judicial review; the only review is by this Parliament. We have a sub judice convention that has not only served us well but has been the subject matter of the following observation. I'm referring now once again to the report by the special committee on the rights and immunities of members presented to the federal Parliament on April 29, 1977. Please listen to this: "It is very unlikely that a judge would be influenced by what is said in this House.... Your committee ... believes that any modification of the practice should be in the direction of greater flexibility rather than stricter application." If there's to be an evolution of the practice it should be in the direction of greater flexibility rather than stricter application.

Members, by voting for this resolution, you risk endorsing a determination that is erroneous in law, that in fact provides greater restrictions on members rather than lessening them, as was the recommendation of the 1977

committee report to the federal Parliament, and that substantially interferes not just with the rights but with the responsibilities of members of this Legislature. Parliamentarians should be fearless and unfettered in their ability to advance the public interest even, and especially, when that means exposing, commenting upon, critiquing policy positions of the Attorney General or his crowns. Our implicit abandonment of that by the acceptance of this resolution and support for this resolution creates an incredibly dangerous state of affairs. I submit to you that any of you—any of you—could be put at risk as a result of it. You owe it to Ontarians not to support this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Further debate?

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): I appreciate the way the debate has taken place thus far. I think it's fair to say there has not been heckling at all thus far, and as such, it's been a debate with a significant amount of decorum.

Let me start by saying this: That was a masterful performance by the justice critic for the third party, an absolute aria. The problem is that we don't have before this House an aria. He's got the wrong opera. Nor do we have the sonata that we heard from the Attorney General critic for the official opposition.

We have before us not an opera at all; we've got, I guess, a poem. It's a straightforward motion involving a straightforward finding, and that's the only question before the House. Do not, I ask members of this House, notwithstanding the excellent advocacy that we've heard so far, and in and of itself it is intrinsically worth listening to—but don't imagine that it actually speaks to the issue that's before the House, because it doesn't. We've gone to Westminster, we've gone to Ottawa, we've gone around the Commonwealth, we've gone around the world, and I'd now like to bring members of this House, and you, Mr. Speaker, and the people of Ontario back down to earth here in Queen's Park to consider what we have before us. It reads thus: "That the Legislative Assembly accept the report of the Integrity Commissioner dated October 25, 2006, and approve the recommendation contained therein."

1650

We've heard about language around "accept" and "adopt." We've just heard a veritable, but arguably selective—only arguably selective—magnum opus on the sub judice rule. But that is not before us—it is not. What is before us is simply this: The Integrity Commissioner considered a complaint, he applied the facts to the laws applying to members of provincial Parliament and he rendered a result.

Nobody has argued, and nobody is going to argue, that the member did not have an ample opportunity to respond to the complaint, that the member did not have evidence he proffered to the Integrity Commissioner considered. I don't know exactly what information was in the hands of the Integrity Commissioner. That's for the Attorney General critic for the official opposition to reveal or not. I don't think it lies in the mouth of the member to make new arguments here, although that is

within his free speech. So the facts were before the Integrity Commissioner, and no one is denying the facts. The law was before the Integrity Commissioner, and we all supported that law—we all did. In fact, Mr. Runciman was a member of the executive council that introduced and supported the laws that are before us.

So what of the Integrity Commissioner? Did he not have authority to make this ruling? This is an Integrity Commissioner appointed with the consent of the Conservatives, the Liberals and the New Democrats during the time in which the Conservatives were the government of Ontario. Nobody denies that the law is what it is. Nobody denies that the facts are what they are. We in this House accept, and by law we accept, that the Integrity Commissioner has the jurisdiction to make the ruling that he did. And he did.

There is no jurisdictional argument here; there is none. I heard none. I listened carefully to the member opposite, the justice critic for the third party. I listened carefully to the Attorney General critic for the official opposition. There have been no allegations of jurisdictional error. There have been no allegations of factual error. There have been no allegations of legal error.

We in this House don't get to pick and choose which rulings of the Integrity Commissioner we like and which ones we don't like. We don't get to pick and choose which laws we think are good and which laws aren't. We accept that there is an Integrity Commissioner who acts as an arbiter of the facts and law before him. And he did, and he ruled. And we accept these recommendations. That is what this is about.

Let's be clear: The magnum opus presented by the justice critic for the third party was not before him. It was interesting, but it wasn't before him. I don't know what was before him in terms of the arguments that have been, and may be, made by the official opposition. I don't know.

It was a short opinion. It was very short; not an aria. It was, in all, 10 pages; not even 10 pages. He considered the facts, heard the arguments made by the Attorney General critic for the official opposition, heard the arguments made by the complainant, applied the law and made this ruling. There has been nothing said, and I will argue that nothing will be said, that challenges the authority of the Integrity Commissioner to make that ruling, the facts that were before him or the jurisdiction for him to make that ruling. What we heard was all very interesting, but none of it was before the Integrity Commissioner and, as such, I urge members to support the motion.

So what did he rule? What was the finding that we are considering? Was it about the ability of members to speak freely?

It was simply this: The Integrity Commissioner writes on page 9 of his report, "I caution all members to be vigilant about raising issues concerning matters that are before a court, however well intended a member's comments may be. Once the court process (including any right of appeal) is complete, there is no bar to reasonable discussion about issues that were before a court. Before

the process is complete, public discussion of matters then before a court is off limits from the standpoint" of a member of provincial Parliament.

Why is it off limits? Firstly, it's off limits because the Integrity Commissioner has ruled that it is off limits, and there's no argument that the Integrity Commissioner had no jurisdiction to make that ruling. This is the Associate Chief Justice of Ontario. This is the Honourable Coulter Osborne, our Integrity Commissioner, whom we accepted to be our Integrity Commissioner. We didn't say, "We accept you to be our Integrity Commissioner except for those things that we fundamentally disagree with."

It's the nature of the rule of law that there has got to be a judge, there have got to be facts and there have got to be laws to apply. And it's the nature of the rule of law that we accept a final decision of the courts, subject to the non obstante clause—

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Bryant: Speaker, we did not heckle during the other members' remarks, and I'd ask that the same be reciprocated.

As for whether or not an application for judicial review might have been made between the rendering of the report and today is not as clear, I think, as the member says—but again, a glorious distraction and illusion of confusion on a matter that is very straightforward.

Why do we have this rule—if we are to get into the purpose of the rule, and I say again to members of this House that that is not before us. We're not debating here whether or not we ought to amend the Members' Integrity Act. We're not here debating whether or not to remove the Integrity Commissioner. There is no doubt that he had the jurisdiction to make this ruling. There is no doubt that in fact the member who was the subject of the complaint was given an opportunity to respond. There is no doubt what the law says and there is no doubt what he ruled. There's no doubt at all. So to discuss the purpose and the history of the sub judice rule is interesting, but that is not before us. What's before us is this report, this Integrity Commissioner, this law and these facts. And he has ruled.

Yes, we don't always agree with everything that an officer of the Legislature says, but we accept it. I have heard many remarks from members of this Legislature about accepting legislative officers' rulings, and he is an officer of this Legislature. In fact, there's a level at which contempt kicks in if one is contemptuous of an officer of the Legislature. The respect for officers of the Legislature is a deeply ingrained tradition in this House, whether it be the Speaker, the Environmental Commissioner, the privacy commissioner or the Integrity Commissioner, our judge.

If we want to change the rules and the laws on sub judice, well, that is something that could be brought before this House, possibly an amendment to the Members' Integrity Act, subject to constitutional limits. I would argue that that would violate the principle of judicial independence and violate people's rights to fair trial. We could have that debate. But that is not before

this House. We are not here to consider whether or not there is in fact a law that gives the Integrity Commissioner the authority to make this finding. There's no doubt about it, and he has made it. I submit that it goes without saying that it ought to be accepted.

1700

Still, people want to talk about why we have a sub judice rule. I will say, to state the obvious, notwithstanding the journey that we went on around the world in search of a sub judice rule, of course, the biggest problem with a sub judice rule is that it's a Latin term. No one knows what it means, and we ought to consider changing what we call the sub judice rule. But that's not before us either. Did the Honourable Coulter Osborne come up with one out of thin air? Of course he didn't. There are limits on speech by members of provincial Parliament; there are already. Let's not pretend for a second that there aren't, that the marketplace of ideas allows members of provincial Parliament to go forth and have immunity from the laws of the nation. We also have some special obligations wherein the sub judice rule arises, but do we have immunity from naming people who are young offenders or accused young offenders? No, we do not. We can't do that. We can't walk outside those doors and criticize a particular prosecution, a particular finding, and name a young offender. We can't do that. Is that a limit on our free speech? Yes, it is. Is there a reason for it? Yes, there is.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): Neither can the press do that.

Hon. Mr. Bryant: The member, I'm sure, will have an opportunity to provide a rebuttal.

Can we walk outside those doors and discuss matters protected by FIPPA? No, we can't do that. We can't do that. Can we walk outside those doors and discuss information that's subject to a publication ban? No, we can't do that. We can't; we'd be breaking the law. There are limits on our free speech in the common law as well. Yes, we have defences of fair comment to make, but we can't libel people. We have special defences as members of provincial Parliament when engaging in political speech. We have special defences because there is something that comes with our office that gives us that special defence, but members of provincial Parliament are not immune from a libel action. They can be found liable for defamation.

"There is another thing that we can't do when we walk out there," says the Integrity Commissioner, "and that is to comment on matters that are before the courts before the process is complete." He writes that "public discussion of matters then before a court is off limits from the standpoint of members of the Legislative Assembly." You ask, "Why? How come? I don't understand why." Again, that's not before us. There is no doubt that there is jurisdiction and that there is no error of jurisdiction and that in fact this is the person empowered to make this ruling. Okay, but let's answer the question why nonetheless. If the member were a member of the executive council, he argued himself—Mr. Runciman, the Attorney General critic for the official opposition—well,

that would mean the sub judice rule would apply and he could not comment on such matters.

Mr. Osborne writes in his report, "Mr. Runciman contended that ... the sub judice rule should be more strictly applied with members of the executive council. He based this submission"—Justice Osborne writes—"on the capacity of members of the executive council to influence decision-making. In his response to the complaint, Mr. Runciman took no issue with the material filed as part of Mr. Sergio's complaint." So, again, he took no issue with the matters before the Integrity Commissioner. But why is it that cabinet members cannot interfere with matters before the court, but MPPs can, to take his argument?

I'm going to take his argument a little further, because if the Attorney General critic were a member of the Law Society of Upper Canada, if he were, like the Speaker, a barrister and solicitor, if he were, like the leader of the official opposition, a barrister and solicitor, if he were, like the justice critic for the NDP, a barrister and solicitor, he would be held to a standard under the rules of professional conduct that forbid him from violating the sub judice rule as counsel. Now, he's not; but if he were, he in fact would violate the rules of professional conduct under 4.01(2): "When acting as an advocate, a lawyer shall not endeavour ... directly or indirectly, to influence the decision or action of a tribunal or any of its officials" or court "in any case or matter by any means other than open persuasion as an advocate." Why would that be? Why is it that a lawyer is subject to the sub judice rule, members of cabinet are subject to sub judice rule, but MPPs are not?

Let's look at why it applies to those people. It's about as stark a case, I think, as anybody could imagine. The short answer is it interferes with people's fair trial, and I will argue in a minute that it interferes with victims' rights. Chief Justice McRuer, in *Criminal Contempt of Court Procedure: A Protection of the Rights of the Individual*, said:

"No judge or juror should be embarrassed in arriving at his decision by an expression of an opinion on the case by anyone. He should not be put in a position where, if he decided in accordance with the opinion expressed or the popular sentiment existing, it can be said he has been influenced; nor should he be put in the position where it could be said he was antagonist to any opinion or popular sentiment. Everyone who has a matter before a court of justice for decision has the right to have the decision of the court founded on the law as the court conceives it to be and the evidence properly submitted."

So, why? Well, if one is to have a fair trial and an independent judiciary, we say—it is conceded by Mr. Runciman that executive council members cannot interfere with a court's decision; it is conceded by him. And so, too, it applies to members of executive council.

The Quebec Court of Appeal held, in *Vermette*—this case, and it's a stark illustration of what is the matter with interfering with matters before the courts: A witness had given evidence regarding the Parti Québécois and some of its leading members. On the same day, in the

National Assembly, the Premier—this is in 1988—denounced the credibility of the witness and the conduct of defence counsel. The trial was stayed, and that was upheld by the Court of Appeal. The issue in the Supreme Court of Canada is whether or not a jury could be said to have been prejudiced by this.

I would have thought that the worst nightmare of the Attorney General critic for the official opposition would be that there was a matter before the court where the trial was stayed because of something that he said. Now he concedes that if he were the Solicitor General or the Minister of Transportation or the Premier or the Attorney General, that would interfere with the court. And he has to concede that if he were a member of the bar, that would interfere with the court. So the argument has to be that MPPs are so lowly in the eyes of the court, are so unrepresentative of public sentiment, are so lacking of the court's respect and concern and are so irrelevant that it's okay for them to say something that interferes with matters before the court.

1710

The member concedes that if he were a cabinet minister, that would violate the sub judice rule. He was a member of the cabinet, and he understands very well that there are limits on an MPP's free speech. But the day the government changes, that MPP qua opposition member, that MPP as opposition member, becomes sufficiently irrelevant as not to be able to interfere with a matter before the court. I say to you, my friends, that that is an entirely unacceptable argument that we cannot accept. For if we agree that there are limits, and if we agree that you can interfere with a fair trial, how can we argue that outside of this chamber we're sufficiently irrelevant that we cannot interfere ourselves? It is such a diminishment of the role of the MPP that it is the exact opposite of the sentiment that I hear from members of the official opposition and of the third party, for they are here to talk about the importance of MPPs, and so they should. They are here to talk about the capacity of members of provincial Parliament to have an impact on matters public, and they should. They are here to talk about the importance of holding the Attorney General to account, and they should. They should.

I listened to the leader of the official opposition. I think he said this, and I know that the justice critic for the third party said this: something to the effect that, "We've got to be able to challenge the policy of the Attorney General to have restitution ordered in this manner in cases such as this." I agree. That's true. Policy, yes. But there's a difference between the policy, which by the way is really a debate for the federal Parliament, because it's the House of Commons that allows restitution to take place under the Criminal Code—but in any event, if members of this House want to take issue with the crown policy manual that sets out the policy of agents of the Attorney General with respect to restitution matters, we can debate that. So why can't we debate the Russo case? Because that interferes with the Russo case, because Mr. Justice David Watt does not deserve—and Ms. Russo does not deserve—to conduct a trial and a hearing whilst

being interfered with. But besides that, what are the outcomes, as Chief Justice McRuer says? What are the outcomes? There are limits.

It's interesting: Mr. Kormos, the House leader of the third party, was the subject—he's not the subject; he's the object, I guess—of a case that went to the Ontario Court of Justice in 1997. The purpose of this is to illustrate the sub judice rule; it's not to get into the conduct of that matter. He visited the family support services office to ascertain the operational status of the new services that the government had put in place to deal with support payments. I think that is a very judicious description of what he was doing. The accused, one Kormos, was charged with assaulting a security guard in connection with the matter. In the Legislature, the Attorney General characterized the accused's actions as being tantamount to a break-in. The accused, Mr. Kormos, moved to have the charges dismissed, arguing that the Attorney General's statement had prejudiced Mr. Kormos's right to a fair trial. That's why we have a sub judice rule.

Now, is there a degree of difference between Premier, chief law officer and member of provincial Parliament in the third party, the opposition or the government? I think an argument can be made that, yes, there's a degree of interference. There's no question that the Parti Québécois Premier's remarks in 1998 were highly interfering of the matter, and thus it was stayed.

In this case, the court found that in fact the Attorney General of the day's remarks did not go so far as to violate the sub judice rule. The court dismissed the accused's motion, but he stated that "the court recognizes that the" then "Attorney General was involved in a heated debate," but he would be "well advised to heed the practice of not commenting on the potential guilt of anyone with respect to any offence that is under investigation by the authorities or before the courts. This caution," the court writes, on Peter Kormos's own motion, "applies to all elected officials but particularly to those occupying the sensitive and important position of Attorney General."

So it is a qualitative difference but not a quantitative difference between the Honourable Bob Runciman, member of executive council past and the honourable member of the official opposition today. Yes, there is a difference, but it is not one that gives him immunity from interfering with matters before the courts. For imagine that you are Mr. Kormos and you make your motion because you think that the judge is going to interfere with your trial. Mr. Kormos is a tough guy. Believe me, he can handle it. I have no doubt that he did it for a number of reasons, which is for him to speak to. But I bet he was thinking of other people who might be before the courts, because I've heard him talk about the rights to fair trial and I know he believes in them, and if you believe in the rights of fair trial, then you believe that a court should be able to make a decision independently.

What does that mean? It means you can't hold a rally in a courtroom. No, there's got to be order in a courtroom, because if you can hold a rally where you say,

"Hang him high," in the courtroom, you're not going to get a fair trial. So you can't do that. There are rules that apply to the operation of the court. There are rules of evidence that apply. You cannot introduce something that would so inflame and prejudice the proceeding, for example, that you would lose the right to fair trial.

But what of outside the court? What about that? Well, a talk show taking place, discussing a matter that's before the court: Is that going to interfere? Is that going to interfere with the judge? What's the difference, you say, between the talk show host and the MPP? You already concede that there's a big difference between the talk show host and a member of the cabinet, but you say—the argument in opposition to this motion goes—that there should be no difference between the talk show host and a member of provincial Parliament. Wow. So one's official—the member of the cabinet—but one's not.

A police officer or a lawyer speaking outside of the courtroom: Is that interfering with a fair trial and victims' rights? Yes. So say the rules of professional conduct and so have held the courts.

The Premier, the Attorney General: Can they interfere with a matter? Yes, absolutely. But not, the argument goes, those lowly members of provincial Parliament. They're not that official.

I can't accept that, Speaker. That's wrong. It defies history. We went to England. It defies history, the notion that elected members of Parliament have no influence over a matter before the court. Really? We don't elect our judges in this country, and thank goodness for that. We have independent trials in this country, by and large, and thank goodness for that. So if we accept the argument of the official opposition and the third party, then (a), it's okay to interfere with that trial. Of course, it wasn't okay when Mr. Kormos was an accused, but it's otherwise okay. It would be okay for an MPP to try and interfere with a trial. Just think about what it's like: You're Mr. Kormos and you're before the court and you're wondering if the presiding judge is finding all of this political talk by an MPP to be interfering with your trial. Do you really think you're going to get justice? Do you think you're going to get a fair trial if an MPP is out there trying to interfere with the matter? I don't think so. But more important, our—

Mr. Bisson: It's a silly argument.

Hon. Mr. Bryant: Our Integrity Commissioner has ruled otherwise.

1720

I think it is fair to say that that applies to the rights of the accused during a fair trial, and I think it is more than fair to say that MPPs' officialdom has not so diminished that they too are not held to a standard which requires that they not interfere with a fair trial.

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Bryant: Speaker, I'm having a hard time, but you're obviously not going to get involved. I look forward to—

The Acting Speaker: Attorney General, you're free to debate this. I have no problems with what's going on. If you want to continue, keep your remarks to yourself.

Hon. Mr. Bryant: It is because the Speaker is an officer of the Legislature that I accept that ruling. And it is because the Integrity Commissioner is an officer of the Legislature that I accept his ruling and that I argue members of this assembly ought to accept his ruling. For that is the question before you.

If you want to have a referendum on the wisdom of the policy of providing restitution to a victim, I can arrange the supporters. I think that the Attorney General critic for the official opposition is painfully aware of his relationship with these people whom he has—to be fair to him—spent a good part of his political career supporting. Joe Womback said just recently in an interview on November 21, sitting right beside Mr. Runciman, “I still support the decision of the courts. I still believe that restitution which is on the books and is in the criminal code, this was probably one of the greatest advancements for victims’ rights in history of Canada.” Joe Womback said that. “This is where the victim of a crime was actually considered for one of the very first times in the sentencing,” he argued, “and the deliberation between the judges, the crowns and the defence attorneys.”

We’ve heard, thanks to the member who spoke first and who made this complaint, from Harry McMurtry on the problem with re-victimizing a victim, as took place according to the victim herself.

We also heard from people who again I would have thought that Mr. Runciman would listen carefully to. Joe Womback said, at the time the decision came down, “All in all it’s a win-win situation. It’s going to help the victim.” Priscilla de Villiers said, “This a red-letter day for victims. It’s something that victim advocates have been asking for for a long time.” John Muise—John Muise, I say to Mr. Runciman—said that he was “happy that Russo will be better able to manage the lifelong struggles that resulted, and will result, from this reckless crime.” Tim Danson, lawyer for the families of the Bernardo victims, said, “It’s wrong to say they’re buying justice, because part of justice is paying compensation to the victim.”

What’s important in this case and particularly egregious about the remarks of the Attorney General critic for the official opposition, Mr. Runciman, is that not only did these remarks, according to the Integrity Commissioner, deliberately attempt to interfere with a matter that was before the court—deliberately, he said—not only that, but for the first time that I can think of, a member of provincial Parliament was attempting to interfere with a remedy for a victim—a remedy for a victim, a restitution order for a victim, a sentence that would have actually benefited a victim. Of all people, actually, Bob Runciman should not have been interfering with an independent judge’s discretion to award some restitution to a victim, restitution prescribed by law under the Criminal Code and handed down by a judge.

But back to where we started and back to the motion: It is straightforward. It is not an aria, it is not a sonata, it is not even an opera. Members of provincial Parliament are official enough in our democratic system to warrant

having this special obligation. Certainly, I would hope that members of this House who respect and accept the Speaker and other officers of this Legislature would accept and respect a ruling of the Integrity Commissioner for the province of Ontario, and I ask all members of this House to do just that.

Mr. Kormos: What if he’s wrong?

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): I think the essential question, as my colleague from Niagara Centre just said, is, what if Coulter Osborne is wrong?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: Who decides?

Mr. Hudak: What if the Integrity Commissioner makes a mistake? My colleague across the way says, “Who decides?” You’d think the Attorney General would—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: I want to hear the member from Erie–Lincoln. We heard the other members earlier, and there was no problem. So can we hear the member from Erie–Lincoln, Attorney General, official opposition critics and third party critic?

Mr. Hudak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That’s why we’re here today, because it is the members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario who decide whether we accept, whether we agree, whether we simply receive or whether we offer comment on the Integrity Commissioner’s ruling. What if the Integrity Commissioner makes a mistake? There is no court of appeal, as Niagara Centre said earlier on. There is no court of appeal to a ruling except the procedure we’re going through tonight in this chamber.

I have tremendous respect for the Honourable Justice Coulter Osborne, our Integrity Commissioner, a man whose career is among the most commendable of justices today. But that doesn’t mean that his rulings are unassailable. It doesn’t mean his rulings are beyond question. Indeed, our role today as legislators is to determine whether we accept his rulings or not. We are that court of appeal, and we stand as that court today to have the essential finding of whether he made a mistake in law, whether he made a mistake in interpretation or in judgment.

The Attorney General said that we can’t pick or choose which rulings we accept or not, but indeed we do. That’s what’s in the standing orders and that’s what we’re doing here today. Just by way of example, the Members’ Integrity Act, subsection 34(2), says, “The assembly shall consider and respond to the report within 30 days after the day the report is laid before it.” And then (3), under “Response,” says, “If the commissioner recommends that a penalty be imposed, the assembly may approve the recommendation and order that the penalty be imposed, or may reject the recommendation, in which case no penalty shall be imposed.”

We decide. We are the court of appeal. Right there in the Members’ Integrity Act it says that we determine whether we accept or reject what the Integrity Commissioner has ruled as a penalty to be imposed. So it’s no

more clear than in the Members' Integrity Act that that's what our decision is today.

The Attorney General also makes an argument that there should be a very strict sub judice rule, whether you're a minister, whether you're the Attorney General or whether you're an MPP. It would be interesting to see if, when he was on this side of the House, he followed that same convention or not. I'm willing to give my honourable colleague the benefit of the doubt. But there were members of the opposition who served with the member from St. Paul's who certainly had a much different interpretation of what that convention was. And do you know what? I agree with them.

As my colleague the member for Leeds–Grenville and my colleague the member from Niagara Centre have said, there's a convention around the sub judice rule. In fact, it's embodied within the standing orders under rules of debate 23(g). As my colleague from Niagara Centre indicated, the Speaker has a duty to rule and to err on the side of freedom of speech with respect to the sub judice rule. The Speaker's decision is his or hers to make when there's a real and substantial jeopardy of causing prejudice to a hearing.

1730

Erskine May speaks to this as well. It talks about the exemption to the sub judice convention on page 47 as follows:

But "where a ministerial decision is in question, or in the opinion of the Chair a case concerns issues of national importance such as the economy, public order or the essential services, reference to the issues or the case may be made in motions, debates or questions." That's with respect to Parliament, so issues of importance to the province of Ontario.

You would certainly think that the issue that was the subject of Mr. Runciman's comments at the time—if I recall correctly, that proceeds from crime could be used for restitution and therefore lessen the sentence—is of great importance. It's of great importance and, I would think, justified in debate here in the assembly and justified in debate in the public sphere as well.

While the Attorney General argued for a very strict sub judice rule, and I appreciate his arguments, I didn't hear a single argument from the Attorney General to say that that rule applies outside of the assembly. In essence, that's what the Integrity Commissioner's ruling says: that it takes the sub judice convention and moves it outside of the assembly to govern members' comments outside of this place. While I listened carefully and appreciated the Attorney General's arguments, and I didn't agree with his arguments in the two cases I mentioned, I did not hear an argument in favour of extending, or that justifies the extension of, the sub judice convention outside of these chambers.

If I followed the debate correctly, nowhere—never, not once—does the sub judice rule govern conduct outside of Parliament. There has not been a single example of this in convention of parliamentary experts that said that the sub judice rule applies outside of Parliament or

outside of the chamber. Coulter Osborne's, the Integrity Commissioner's, decision would be the first such case. As my colleague from Leeds–Grenville said, members would have less right, if this ruling were followed, to speak outside of this House than the general public would, which restricts our ability to give comment on critical issues to the press, to constituents, to offer balance in arguments, another side of the story.

Before I was elected, I remember my colleague from Leeds–Grenville bringing questions forward about the so-called "deal with the devil," about the Karla Homolka case. Coming from Niagara, I appreciate the grave sensitivities of that case, the outcry and puzzlement, the sadness of constituents when they found out that Karla Homolka was getting a much lighter sentence than people thought was appropriate. Thank God that Bob Runciman, and I'm sure other members of the assembly, brought that forward, because they expressed that anguish, they expressed the concern that millions of Canadians felt about that deal with the devil. I worry greatly that if we accept Commissioner Osborne's recommendations, the ability to cite these cases, to raise questions, to shine a spotlight on them will be severely restricted.

No doubt issues like the Morgentaler case in the 1980s and the Latimer case were brought before the Legislative Assembly or to Parliament and certainly were part of public discussion by elected officials outside of those chambers, and with good reason: important cases in the public sphere, weighty issues in the crucible. Members should have the ability to speak to those issues, to represent constituents and bring views to the matters even when they are before the courts.

I remember my colleague Gary Guzzo, of Ottawa, bringing forward questions—

Interjection: A good man.

Mr. Hudak: I appreciate that my colleague says, "A good man." But my colleague will remember when Gary Guzzo brought forward questions to our own Attorney General at the time about cases in Cornwall, very serious allegations and concerns about sexual abuse, if I recall, that may or may not have occurred in the Cornwall area. Mr. Guzzo brought forward those questions to the Attorney General, made comments outside of these chambers. At the end of the day, when this government came into play, it eventually did launch an inquiry into the proceedings, the happenings, in Cornwall. I say good for Mr. Guzzo for raising these concerns of constituents or connections, his concern about what was happening or what had happened in the Cornwall area.

I have other colleagues who are going to speak to this, so I'll conclude.

I know what it's like to be on the government side of the floor. I remember some very effective critics of our government, whether it's Sean Conway, Gerard Kennedy in many ways, I'll give credit to the current health minister, Mr. Smitherman, who can ask very hard-hitting questions of the government of the day. Sure, sometimes you don't actually mind when they get a bit of a come-

uppance. I remember Mr. Kennedy got into some trouble because it was said that some of the facts he was relating about health care may not have been accurate. So I appreciate there's a temptation on the government side if you can give some comeuppance to a member of the opposition who may get under your skin from time to time.

Mr. Runciman is a very effective, determined and courageous advocate in fighting crime and supporting victims. I can appreciate the temptation to try to put a leash on Mad Dog if you don't like the kinds of questions he's asking. But, most importantly, think what the consequences, if this ruling is accepted, will mean for members who are on the government side who may be on this side down the road, or future members. If we accept this ruling by Justice Osborne, a future Integrity Commissioner will have this precedent before him or her—

Mr. Kormos: May have.

Mr. Hudak: —may have this precedent before him or her in a further case. They can, under the Members' Integrity Act, impose orders, sanctions, including suspension of a member or causing the member to have to vacate his or her seat, and there may be a precedent to use in a future ruling.

So I think we all need to be very cautious about where gotcha politics can take you and who gets impacted by that down the road and the infringement that's going to cause on the ability of members to pursue weighty issues, like using criminal proceeds, potentially, for restitution to lessen a sentence. That was the essence of Mr. Runciman's concern, and good for him for raising it, for raising issues like the Karla Homolka deal that was made with the Attorney General at the time and the lenient sentence that consecutive governments then had to deal with, or issues like Morgentaler and Latimer and these weighty issues that members should comment on without fear, whether in the assembly or outside of the assembly.

To answer the Attorney General's question, we decide. We decide. In this matter, with all due respect to Justice Coulter Osborne, I find his ruling to be mistaken. It sets a very worrisome precedent if accepted by the members of the assembly.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Yakabuski: I'm pleased to join the debate on this resolution today. I have to concur with my colleague from Erie—Lincoln and also the member from Niagara Centre on a number of points. I won't be concurring with the Attorney General on too many points.

I believe that the whole premise of this motion is partisan and politically motivated, as my colleague from Erie—Lincoln inferred. This was brought forward because the government was uncomfortable with the fact that the member for Leeds—Grenville raised this issue outside of the House.

Now the Integrity Commissioner—and I have the utmost respect for Justice Coulter Osborne—has given us an opinion to rule on here. It is the prerogative of the House whether to accept this report or not. That is what we do as a Legislature. We're not told that we must

accept this; the report is presented and it is up to us as legislators to accept it.

Mr. Runciman: Or not.

Mr. Yakabuski: Or not. As I say, the whole thing is politically motivated on the part of the government, and I would say instituted primarily probably by the Attorney General himself, even though he didn't make the application, the member for York West made the application, but I would suspect that it was at the order of the Attorney General because he wanted to extract his pound of flesh off the member for Leeds—Grenville. It's an attempt to embarrass Bob Runciman, is what it is.

1740

Now, we've heard the various arguments, and I must say the member for Niagara Centre had a very reasoned argument, backed up by precedent of people of such stature as Erskine May, Beauchesne and also, as he said, one of the foremost authorities on procedures and matters of the House, the late Stanley Knowles, who certainly studied this and believed that the mechanics of the House was something that we had to pay a great deal of attention to.

The Attorney General liked to draw the comparison between the member for Leeds—Grenville and himself, saying that the member for Leeds—Grenville was attempting to influence this case. Well, I think we have to stand here as reasonable people and ask ourselves—no disrespect to my colleague from Leeds—Grenville, but does anybody really believe that he was going to have any influence on this case? Absolutely not. It was already widely reported in the media. He was going to have no influence whatsoever on a judge or a judicial body as to what they were going to do about this case. However, if the Attorney General was making comments on the case, yes, that would be much different. So you can't compare fairly the role and/or the responsibility of an individual member of the Legislature with the Attorney General, who's the chief law officer of the crown.

I recall years ago when George Kerr was the Solicitor General and he made a call on behalf of a constituent with regard to a case before the courts. He made a call to a crown attorney. George Kerr immediately had to resign. That's the gravity that is placed upon the office of a member of the executive council such as the Attorney General or, in the case of Mr. Kerr, the Solicitor General, because they clearly do have an influence and what they say can and most likely will have an influence on the decisions made by the courts. But the questions raised here in response to an article running in the newspapers by the member for Leeds—Grenville was highly unlikely to have any influence whatsoever. But what it did do was draw attention to whether or not the practice was one that the public would or would not approve of, such as their memories with the Karla Homolka case of years before, where there was that deal made with the devil to extract testimony out of her for a more lenient sentence. Well, once the people were aware of that, they weren't very happy about it. Mr. Runciman was questioning whether

or not that kind of deal is in the best interests of the public.

I know there were definitely some strange circumstances with this one, because we do have a civil court system, but I suppose the ability to sue the perpetrators of this crime would have been limited because they wouldn't have been around. They weren't your average citizen, of course.

It is clear in the instances that my colleague from Niagara Centre raised that the application of sub judice only applies, according to Erskine May, to matters in the House, not outside of the House. If the Integrity Commissioner's report is based on the sub judice of this subject, then of course Erskine May would disagree with him, as would Beauchesne. As Mr. Kormos said, in doubtful cases you should rule on the side of free speech on the part of the members of this assembly, and ultimately, in this assembly the Speaker is the one who rules. So I think my friend from Erie-Lincoln has raised the issue that ultimately this House will be the one to pass judgment as to whether or not we want to agree with the motion put forth by the Attorney General, which is worded as benignly as possible, but which is in fact a censure motion against the member for Leeds-Grenville.

I can understand why the government sometimes may want to take a swipe at the Mad Dog. He is one of the strongest critics of the government when criticism is warranted. He is one who presents a most reasoned and logical argument when criticism is warranted. He is one who has 25, closing in on 26 years of experience in this House, on both sides of the aisle. So when Bob Runciman rises to speak, he's not just making noise, like we sometimes get from the Attorney General; he is basing his positions on a long-standing career of serving the people of Ontario, both as a cabinet minister and as a member of Her Majesty's loyal opposition. They know, in fact, that one of the members they are most concerned about, when he rises to speak, is Bob Runciman. So if there's a way that they can censure him and maybe have him declawed to some degree, they're going to take a crack at that. I do believe that that's what we have here on the part of the government, that they've decided they are going to go after Mr. Runciman on this.

The whole premise of even requesting the Integrity Commissioner's report contrasts with the request that we made of the Integrity Commissioner in the case of the then Minister of Transportation, Mr. Takhar, about whom we had reams of evidence with regard to our concerns about his suitability to continue to sit on the executive council. But the Integrity Commissioner could only rule on a very limited amount of that evidence because he didn't have the ability to do an investigation. He could only rule on what was presented to him.

Mr. Bisson: And you're not going to get mad if I heckle you?

Mr. Yakabuski: Absolutely not.

Having said that, we certainly disagreed with the ultimate outcome of the Integrity Commissioner's report on then-Transportation Minister Takhar, but we respected

the fact that the Integrity Commissioner had to rule only on what he had.

What was really sad about that was the failure of the Premier to act in a decisive manner, full of integrity. That's what failed to happen then. When the Premier decided that nothing would be done about it—because, again, Dalton McGuinty always looks at the politics, not at whether a decision is right or wrong.

The Attorney General talked about respect. He talked about respect for you, Speaker. He talked about respect for the Integrity Commissioner. He talked about respect for the privacy commissioner. So you would have to assume that respect is something that the members on the opposite side consider to be extremely important. What about respect for this chamber? What about respect for the members of this House, when the Minister of Energy makes a promise, a commitment to report back to a standing committee of this Legislature with specific information that he had been requested to provide and fails to do that, and when he is subsequently questioned in the House on that very matter, he fails to even address the subject? So when I see and hear the Attorney General speaking about respect, I would advise him to get out at the very next cabinet meeting that dictionary that Mr. Kormos likes to get out and lay on the table for the members of that executive in big, bold letters the word "respect" and the definition that applies to it, because I think that is important too. Quite frankly, if they were to have more respect for this assembly, I wouldn't be having a late show with the Minister of Energy.

1750

I have been informed that I am not the last one to speak on this subject, so I am going to yield at this point. But I will say that I think it is our right and our privilege to find that we do not accept the report of the Integrity Commissioner. It is the prerogative of this House to say, "No, we believe otherwise." And I do chastise this government for even bringing this motion forward, because it is done to censure and to whack Bob Runciman as opposed to making this chamber more effective and representative to the people of Ontario.

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby-Ajax): I am very grateful for the opportunity to join the debate this afternoon with respect to this government's motion concerning the report of the Integrity Commissioner, Mr. Justice Coulter Osborne, because in my view the issues raised in and around this motion are really of fundamental importance in that they deal with the statements and comments that members of this Legislature can make both within and outside the legislative chamber, and specifically whether there has been a contravention of the sub judice rule.

At the outset, I should state that in no way are any of my comments meant as any kind of a criticism of Mrs. Russo, whose case was the subject matter of this report. Mrs. Russo was the innocent victim of a horrible crime, and her life and the life of her family has been shattered by it in ways that none of us will ever be able to comprehend. No amount of money is ever going to be able to compensate this poor woman for what she has had to go

through, and what the rest of her life is going to be. No one on any side of this legislative chamber would ever begrudge her, I don't think, any of the money that she has been receiving as a result of the agreement that was made. I think this was implicitly acknowledged by Mr. Justice Coulter Osborne in his report when he commented that Mr. Runciman's intentions were good as far as this was concerned, that he did not begrudge her the money; in fact, Mr. Runciman explicitly stated that Mrs. Russo should receive compensation. That's not the debate. What we're looking at here is this government refusing a compromise position for purely political reasons, because they want, as I heard my colleague the member from Renfrew say, to whack Mr. Runciman. Well, they really want to put him on the hot seat for no good reason.

But there are issues that are raised within Mr. Justice Coulter Osborne's report that, with all due respect, we should all be concerned about as legislators in this chamber. I have the utmost respect for Mr. Justice Osborne, but we cannot accept this report and accept that there was a breach of the sub judice rule in this case, because it is a matter of fundamental importance that members should be able to speak out with respect to policies of this government that they disagree with. These are significant implications that we should bear in mind that are not only relevant to members of this Legislature but to members of this Legislature in years to come. I've heard other members, as they have been speaking this evening about it, speak about a slippery slope. I fear that too. I think we need to be mindful of our role as legislators here, and what our responsibilities are to our constituents and to the people of Ontario. I would urge all of the members to vote against this motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): In the few minutes that are left I'd just like to say a little bit about this. I am amazed that the Liberal member from St. Catharines would bring this in, because normally he's a pretty good guy, you know. I've been here with him for 16 years, and most of the time he's very easy to get along with. He's very sensitive. But this time something has happened over there. I'm sure it's coming out of the Premier's office, because I know the member from St. Catharines would be easier to get along with and would be able to change this.

But this is censorship, is what it is. In here there are certain words we can't use. I know that the Speaker will bring—

Interjection.

Mr. Murdoch: No, this is more—

Mr. Kormos: What are those?

Mr. Murdoch: Well, we can't say "lie" and "deceit" and things like that. We can't say those things, and we wouldn't do that. I find it strange that the commissioner would say these things and want us to accept this. Outside of this House it's going to be difficult for us to say anything from now on. I don't think that's what you want. We are politicians, and from time to time we say

things. This is something even after the court case was done. I find it very unusual that this would happen.

We have a government now governing Ontario that had a lot of promises, and a lot of people out there say they haven't kept these promises. Would you want the Integrity Commissioner to come along and say that this government can't go out and say anything because now they haven't kept all their promises? I would like to bring that point up: Would we want to spend a whole day on a commissioner's report, saying that we've got to censor the government of the day because they said something at one time and then it didn't happen? They have their reasons.

The House leader must be just worried about this. I know, because he's not the type of guy to do something like this, so I'm really puzzled. You know, one of the promises that was made by the Premier now was that we were going to have open government and everyone here was going to vote the way they wanted to vote. This would be something that—

Interjection.

Mr. Murdoch: I'm hearing from the member from St. Catharines that this is a free vote. It will be very interesting to see how the members across will vote for this. Maybe they'll turn it down. We can only hope that they will do that. But if we're having a free vote that has been yelled about, then I'm happy with that, and it will be good to see how the government votes today. We'll see what happens. Thanks for the time.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Bradley has moved government notice of motion number 247. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1758 to 1808.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Bradley has moved that the Legislative Assembly accept the report of the Integrity Commissioner dated October 25, 2006, and approve the recommendation contained therein.

All those members in favour, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Gerretsen, John	Parsons, Ernie
Bentley, Christopher	Hoy, Pat	Peters, Steve
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jeffrey, Linda	Phillips, Gerry
Bradley, James J.	Kular, Kuldip	Qaadri, Shafiq
Broten, Laurel C.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Racco, Mario G.
Brownell, Jim	Leal, Jeff	Ramal, Khalil
Bryant, Michael	Levac, Dave	Ramsay, David
Cansfield, Donna H.	Matthews, Deborah	Sandals, Liz
Caplan, David	Mauro, Bill	Sergio, Mario
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	McMeekin, Ted	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	McNeely, Phil	Smitherman, George
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Dhillon, Vic	Milloy, John	Van Bommel, Maria
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mitchell, Carol	Wilkinson, John
Duguird, Brad	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Fonseca, Peter	Oraziotti, David	Zimmer, David

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Horwath, Andrea
Hudak, Tim

Murdoch, Bill
Ouellette, Jerry J.

Wilson, Jim
Yakubski, John

Nays

Barrett, Toby
Bisson, Gilles
Chudleigh, Ted
DiNovo, Cheri
Elliott, Christine
Hampton, Howard
Hardeman, Ernie

Klees, Frank
Kormos, Peter
MacLeod, Lisa
Marchese, Rosario
Martiniuk, Gerry
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia

Prue, Michael
Runciman, Robert W.
Scott, Laurie
Sterling, Norman W.
Tabuns, Peter
Tascona, Joseph N.
Tory, John

The Deputy Clerk (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 48; the nays are 27.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It being past 6 of the clock, this House is now adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1811.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. James K. Bartleman
Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. Brown
Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers
Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (L) Speaker / Président	Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Scott, Laurie (PC)
Ancaster-Dundas-	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Flamborough-Aldershot		Hamilton East /	Horwath, Andrea (ND)
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC) Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Hamilton-Est	
	Prue, Michael (ND)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Hon. / L'hon. Marie (L) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique
Beaches-East York /			Marsales, Judy (L)
Beaches-York-Est		Hamilton West /	
Bramalea-Gore-Malton-	Kular, Kuldip (L)	Hamilton-Ouest	
Springdale		Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (L) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Brampton Centre /	Jeffrey, Linda (L)		Mitchell, Carol (L)
Brampton-Centre		Huron-Bruce	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Brampton West-Mississauga /	Dhillon, Vic (L)	Kenora-Rainy River	Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (L) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga			Milloy, John (L)
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kitchener Centre /	
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kitchener-Centre	Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Sterling, Norman W. (PC)
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Lanark-Carleton	Runciman, Robert W. (PC)
Don Valley East /	Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, deputy government House leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement	Leeds-Grenville	Matthews, Deborah (L)
Don Valley-Est		London North Centre /	
		London-Centre-Nord	
Don Valley West /	Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (L) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	London West /	Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (L) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Don Valley-Ouest		London-Ouest	Ramal, Khalil (L)
Dufferin-Peel-	Tory, John (PC) Leader of the Opposition /		Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (L) Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship / ministre des Petites Entreprises et de l'Entrepreneuriat
Wellington-Grey	chef de l'opposition	London-Fanshawe	Fonseca, Peter (L)
Durham	O'Toole, John (PC)	Mississauga Centre /	
Eglinton-Lawrence	Colle, Hon. / L'hon. Mike (L) Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration	Mississauga-Centre	Peterson, Tim (L)
			Delaney, Bob (L)
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (L) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail	Mississauga East /	
		Mississauga-Est	
Erie-Lincoln	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Mississauga South /	
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Mississauga-Sud	
		Mississauga West /	
Etobicoke Centre /	Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (L) Minister of Transportation /	Mississauga-Ouest	
Etobicoke-Centre	ministre des Transports	Nepean-Carleton	MacLeod, Lisa (PC)
Etobicoke North /	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Niagara Centre /	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Etobicoke-Nord		Niagara-Centre	
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (L) Minister of the Environment /	Niagara Falls	Craiton, Kim (L)
	ministre de l'Environnement	Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Nipissing	Smith, Monique M. (L)
Guelph-Wellington	Sandals, Liz (L)	Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Oak Ridges	Klees, Frank (PC)	Stormont–Dundas– Charlottenburgh	Brownell, Jim (L)
Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (L) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)		Racco, Mario G. (L)
Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Thornhill	Mauro, Bill (L)
Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (L) Premier and President of the Council, Minister of Research and Innovation / premier ministre et président du Conseil, ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L) Minister of Health Promotion / ministre de la Promotion de la santé	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior- Nord	
Ottawa–Orléans	McNeely, Phil (L)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	Ramsay, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Ottawa–Vanier	Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (L) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones		Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L) Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / vice-premier ministre, ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Parkdale–High Park	DiNovo, Cheri (ND)	Toronto Centre–Rosedale / Toronto-Centre–Rosedale	Tabuns, Peter (ND)
Parry Sound–Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)		Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Perth–Middlesex	Wilkinson, John (L)	Toronto–Danforth	Sorbara, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (L) Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre des Finances, président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
Peterborough	Leal, Jeff (L)	Trinity–Spadina	Arnott, Ted (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge	Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Vaughan–King–Aurora	Elliott, Christine (PC)
Prince Edward–Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)		Zimmer, David (L)
Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Yakabuski, John (PC)		Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L) Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Sarnia–Lambton	Di Cocco, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (L) Minister of Culture / ministre de la Culture	Waterloo–Wellington	Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L) Minister of Energy / ministre de l'Énergie
Sault Ste. Marie	Oraziotti, David (L)		Kwinter, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (L) Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Duguid, Brad (L)		Munro, Julia (PC)
Scarborough East / Scarborough-Est	Chambers, Hon. / L'hon. Mary Anne V. (L) Minister of Children and Youth Services / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse	Whitby–Ajax	Sergio, Mario (L)
Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	Willowdale	
Scarborough–Agincourt	Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (L) Minister of Government Services / ministre des Services gouvernementaux	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Scarborough–Rouge River	Balkissoon, Bas (L)		
Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Windsor–St. Clair	
Simcoe–Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	
St. Catharines	Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L) Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, government House leader / ministre du Tourisme, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées, leader parlementaire du gouvernement	York North / York-Nord	
St. Paul's	Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L) Attorney General / procureur général	York West / York-Ouest	
Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)	Burlington	Vacant
		Markham	Vacant
		York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	Vacant

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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No. 123B

N° 123B

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 21 November 2006

Mardi 21 novembre 2006



Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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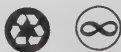
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 21 November 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 21 novembre 2006

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 107, An Act to amend the Human Rights Code, that the standing committee on justice policy be authorized to meet from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and after routine proceedings on Wednesday, November 29, 2006, to consider and complete clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the clerk of the committee shall be noon on Wednesday, November 29, 2006. On November 29, 2006, at no later than 5 p.m., those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. The committee shall be authorized to meet beyond the normal hour of adjournment until completion of clause-by-clause consideration. Any division required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 127(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House not later than Thursday, November 30, 2006. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That, upon receiving the report of the standing committee on justice policy, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called on that same day; and

That, on the day the order for third reading for the bill is called, the time available for debate, up to 5 p.m. or 9:20 p.m., as the case may be, shall be apportioned equally among the recognized parties; and

That when the time allotted for debate has expired, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and put every

question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That the vote on third reading may be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to 10 minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): I think in the fourth last paragraph you said "5 p.m." and I believe that it reads "5:50 p.m."

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I stand corrected.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much. The minister has moved motion 248. Would the minister like to say a few words?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I do want to make some comments on Bill 107 and the motion today and why the government believes that it is very important that we move this legislation along.

As we have heard in the Legislature today, certainly the Attorney General and our Premier have taken the opportunity to remind the people in this assembly that this is legislation that has been awaited for a very long time. I remember, when I was in opposition, I met with many groups in my constituency office who had concerns about the human rights bill and where there needed to be improvements. I congratulate the Premier and the Attorney General because they have moved this forward. They have recognized that there is a need to ensure that people who wish to avail themselves of the justice system can receive that justice in a timely way.

1850

Just a few points that I want to make on behalf of the bill. Under this proposed legislation the Ontario Human Rights Commission will be strengthened. It will have a mandate that will focus to address issues such as education promotion to share with the people of the province how they can better and more easily access the justice system. There is a public advocacy component, and I think all of us in this House certainly appreciate how important it is that people across the province of Ontario have it made known to them what their rights are and how they can seek justice if they believe that they are victims in any way, in that particular circumstance. The bill also accommodates for research and monitoring.

I've had the opportunity to review the bill. One component of the bill—it is obviously not a part of the present bill that Ontarians have to deal with—is the fact that in this bill, number one, there is a requirement that the commissioner will provide an annual report to this

assembly. So accountability is a big part of this bill. Also, there is a requirement in the bill that the legislation would be reviewed in five years. Going forward, if there are shortcomings in the legislation or in the operation of the commission, if they are identified, this piece of legislation actually directs that in five years there would be a review and therefore an opportunity to improve and/or correct any parts of the bill that are not adequately meeting the needs of the people of Ontario. We, however, do believe that the changes that were being contemplated when this bill was drafted have been made after much consultation and many years of consideration on how, going forward, we can better ensure that the rights of Ontarians are considered and defended and represented.

Other features of the bill are to address the systematic discrimination that may occur from time to time in our province. There are very specific commissions in the tribunal, very specific responsibilities. As a result of the kind of input and the real-life stories that have come to us, we have been directed by those. As a result, we have, I believe, brought forward a piece of legislation that will better enable people in the province of Ontario who may be victims of racism, for example, or who may be disabled and feel that they have been victimized because of their disability—this bill provides that they would have better access to justice to have their cases heard.

I have to say that I have heard anecdotally a number of stories from constituents who right now have been caught up in a human rights system where it can take literally years and years to be resolved. In some cases, the parties who brought the action forward are no longer even involved in their roles. In many cases when the processes drag out that long, you really have to ask: Has justice really been served if it has taken so long to actually complete?

I listened very carefully to the Attorney General today when he was answering questions during question period, and I think the point he made that, for me, perhaps makes this piece of legislation most relevant to my constituents is that Bill 107 is going to provide real, adequate and timely justice for the people in the province of Ontario. In many cases—in far too many cases—that has not happened.

Our government is an activist government. We believe in acting on behalf of the good and the well-being of the people in our province. There is no question that any time a government would look to act on legislation of this nature, it's going to evoke controversy. We think that is a very good thing. That is the reason why we have scheduled so many days of committee hearings, so we could hear that response, that reaction, that this kind of legislation understandably does inspire. We have listened very carefully. I know that the Attorney General has been working very hard to ensure that folks who have a desire to make their feelings known about this legislation have had the opportunity. I know that he works very hard to ensure that their issues have been and will continue to be addressed. I know that he is going to be proposing amendments.

So I think it's very important, for the members of this House and most importantly for the people of Ontario, that they recognize that our government believes that it's important to act swiftly, that people have had to endure delays in justice for far too long and our government is not going to tolerate that anymore. We maybe don't understand but certainly respect that there are parties in this House who really have no interest in moving this legislation forward expeditiously, if at all. Well, we're not going to be a part of that. We're here to act on behalf of the people of Ontario. We will do what we believe is best in their interest, and we believe that, by considering Bill 103 and having it dealt with in the matter, what we're doing this evening is what's best for the people of Ontario. I thank you very much for this opportunity.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): In the short time that I've been here, I think this is the first time I've spoken on one of these time allocation motions. I realize that this is not the first time in this House, by governments of any party, that time allocation has been used. In fact, we had had quite an interesting recitation today, I think from the Attorney General, of various times it's been used in the past.

What is particularly sad about this is that the one thing that I find frustrating about being involved in the political process and being involved as an elected representative is the degree to which it's difficult, quite often, to engage members of the public in the pieces of legislation that we're passing here, to get people in large numbers to show genuine interest—pro, con or otherwise—on things that we're doing here, to get people to actually decide that maybe they're interested enough to watch the television at 7 o'clock at night, watch some of the debates we're having.

This bill, because it is what I described earlier today as a foundation piece of legislation, which I think really has a lot to do with the way we live our lives, the way we govern ourselves—a lot of the things that we talk about in here, in terms of basic core values of Ontario citizenship—is one of those pieces of legislation that I'm not surprised the people of Ontario have a great deal of interest in and would like to see us amend and reform with great care.

I thought that the Attorney General today, quite frankly, was outrageous in talking about how the only part of the record of the Progressive Conservative Party with respect to the human rights legislation was to cut it. In fact, I just went back and got out Hansard from 1961, where it talked there about the fact that that was the day on which the Ontario Human Rights Code—it was then called the Ontario Code of Human Rights—was introduced. It was a consolidation of bills, every single one of them passed by a Progressive Conservative government: the Racial Discrimination Act, 1944; the Fair Employment Practices Act; the Female Employees' Fair Remuneration Act; the Fair Accommodation Practices Act; the Ontario Anti-Discrimination Commission; and on it goes. Every one of those things was introduced

by a Progressive Conservative government. In fact, the Attorney General, aside from being unfair in that characterization today, also suggested that this was the first time in 44 years that this bill had been amended in a significant way. That, too, is inconsistent with the facts, in that Dr. Bob Elgie, the member at the time for York East, led a very significant reform to the Human Rights Code in 1980, which Mr. Lepofsky referred to today when he was on the premises at Queen's Park. It was said by Mr. Warrender, the Minister of Labour in 1961, "We all agree that respect for the dignity and rights of every human being is the foundation stone of peace and justice in this country and this world. The promotion of the kind of society where men and women of all races and creeds can come together in co-operation and goodwill is the basic objective of Ontario's Code of Human Rights."

It was very interesting, because on that day we had speeches in this Legislature from members of the New Democratic Party and members of the then official opposition, the Liberal Party. I'll come back to this at the end, because the spirit within which that was dealt with at that time was quite different from what is going on here today.

1900

Having looked at that history, I did want to correct the record in that regard because I think the Attorney General's comments were totally inconsistent with the facts and were outrageous. Having said that, what is equally outrageous is the history of this matter in the recent period of time. The first thing we have—and the Attorney General will recall this, as will other members of the House—is that there was a series of questions asked last spring about the degree to which there had been adequate consultation undertaken before the bill was introduced. As I recall—and I can't quote it; I don't have it in front of me—the Attorney General had made a commitment, at that time, that before any bill was introduced—I think I'm correct in saying this—there would be full consultation. He was able to stand up in this House and read off a long list of groups that he'd consulted, and I take him at his word. I'm sure he did. The problem was that we were able to get up in this House and read a long list of groups that said they had not been consulted and wanted to be consulted. So already, at that time, the minister was not acting in a manner consistent with his word in that he failed to consult a lot of these groups that said they weren't consulted.

So we started off, on a matter that should be of common cause between all parties, common cause as best one can pull it together—and I know it's not easy—to try to get a consensus behind this most fundamental foundation piece of legislation in our society with a group of people who felt, inconsistent with the word of the minister, that they were left out.

The minister then has answered for this, or not answered for it, as the case may be, throughout a period of time since then—because we've asked various questions about when you were going to consult—and every

time, I think it's fair to say, it's, "Don't worry; we will. Don't worry; we'll consult. Everybody will be heard."

The most explicit he was on this was just a week ago, on November 14, when in this House, in question period, in response to a question from my colleague from Whitby-Ajax, he said, "I look forward to the matter being debated in the committee, not only tomorrow and the next day but however long it takes." That is exactly what he said: "however long it takes." He didn't say, "however long it takes as long as it's over by next Tuesday," or "however long it takes if we can hear the next eight groups that want to be heard," most of which, by the way, were favourable to the government's legislation. It's an odd coincidence that the people who probably were lined up to speak first—because the government knew it was going to do this, notwithstanding that the minister's word, given in this House, was that we would have this discussion go on and hear from people, to use his words, "however long it takes."

That may have been the minister claiming he mispoke himself. I don't know. He hasn't explained yet why he said one thing and did another, notwithstanding that we all understand that that is the hallmark of the McGuinty Liberal government. But the very same day, he signed a letter to Ms. Margaret Parsons, executive director of the African Canadian Legal Clinic, in which he talks about looking forward to the committee holding additional public hearings in the winter on dates and in locations to be determined—in the winter. I don't think he thinks it's winter now. It's not winter yet. "Winter" means after December 21, by which time the guillotine will have been brought down on this bill and people will have been shut out. Why did he write and sign that letter on the 14th, giving his word that there would be opportunity for people to be heard and that this was in the hands of the committee, which is what this letter says? Those are the two things we have from him most recently, on top of all the things from the spring where he gave his word that people would be heard, even those whom we identified as not having been heard earlier on.

Then it gets even more interesting because the next day the committee meets, and it has a report from the subcommittee recommending more hearings be held, including hearings after Christmas, to make sure we heard from all those who wanted to be heard.

What happens that day? The committee unanimously votes to accept that report to have the extra hearings. I know there is this fraud that is perpetrated that sort of says, "Oh, the committees really control their own affairs. We never have anything to say about that." That's kind of like last week, when the Premier wrote a letter to the Ombudsman saying, "Don't worry. You'll be heard and you'll get the time that you want at the committee." Meanwhile, his members were ordered to vote down the Ombudsman having 15 more minutes of time that the Ombudsman wanted.

In this case, lo and behold, what we have here is a good thing. All the members of the committee from all parties—as it should be on a piece of human rights legis-

lation like this—vote in favour of having the extra time and the extra hearings and, on the strength of that, the clerk of the committee goes out and spends 106,000 taxpayer dollars buying ads in the papers to say, “Come to the hearings. We want to hear from you.” That’s money we now can’t get back, by the way, but this is not about money. It’s just interesting that they permitted that to happen.

Lo and behold—that’s on November 15—five days later, on November 20, the guillotine comes out, so obviously what happened here is that the Liberal members knew what they wanted and they did vote to have the hearings go ahead. The Premier’s office and the Attorney General’s office ordered that this debate be shut down because it was inconvenient to them to actually think they might listen to some people from across the province. I wonder what it is they’re afraid of hearing. We are trying—I think we should be trying, in any event—to develop a consensus as broad as we possibly can when it comes to the Ontario Human Rights Code and what the minister I think has correctly described as “fundamental reform.”

By the way, the minister got up and asserted—or I guess it was the Premier who did today—that we, the Progressive Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party, are opposed to reforming the Human Rights Code. No one has ever said that, but we do think that, if you’re reforming as fundamental a foundation piece of legislation as this, you take the time to do it right, you hear the people who want to be heard, especially when we have so much trouble engaging people in legislation and things we do here, and especially when a lot of people do have some concerns about the bill. So we should get it right, as opposed to getting it done quickly.

The fact of the matter is that passing it now versus passing it, which we offered to do, first thing up in the spring, after the people have been heard today, is not going to make a material difference in terms of eliminating the old backlog or getting started on the new one, where the minister himself has been extraordinarily vague about the degree of legal advice people are going to be able to get: how much of it, how many lawyers, where they are going to be. Heaven knows, we won’t even be able to hire the people between now and the time when we could have that vote taken in March, after everyone had been heard and with a much greater chance that we will have developed a consensus by that time that will allow for this legislation to be passed in the manner that it should be passed, and so we have the guillotine.

I want to just share a couple of quotes. We have pages and pages of these, and it’s almost nauseating to read them. But we have the government House leader, and he said, “Each of the time allocation motions which close off or choke off debate in this House seems to be more drastic as it comes forward ... more sinister as it relates to the privileges of members of this House and as it relates to healthy, democratic debate for the people of this province.” That was December 16, 1977.

Then on the same day he says, “The opposition role is to help to slow the government down, and I think ultimately better legislation for all the people of this province emerges when the government is forced to take a little longer to pass that legislation.” Well, they’re singing quite a different tune today about how that delay is going to be the worst thing on earth and that the world is going to come to an end if we don’t jam and ram this through on a couple of hours’ notice.

Then we have again Mr. Bradley, the member for St. Catharines, on December 10, 2002: “I find it most unfortunate as well that this bill will be rammed through with what we call a time allocation motion or what is known as closing off debate. If nobody cares about this, governments will continue to do it. No matter what those governments are, they will continue to do it. It’s not healthy for the democratic system. It relegates individual members of the Legislature to the status of robots, and that’s most unfortunate.”

What really pains me is that the people who are most being relegated to being robots are the people on the Liberal side of the House. I predict with certainty that there won’t be one who will have the guts to get up in this House and say, “This is wrong,” that we should be hearing from these people who want to be heard, that this is a fundamental, foundation piece of legislation that this Legislature is considering, that these people have every bit as much right to be heard as the people who spoke in favour, whom they did allow to be heard last week. They will do what they’re told. They will do what they’re ordered to do.

They showed a rare glimmer of independence in voting for the additional hearings, but then the hammer came down on them and said, “How dare you vote with the Progressive Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party for more hearings and to actually have people be heard? We’ve got to shut her down—shut her down. We don’t want to hear from those people. We know what’s best. We’re the McGuinty Liberal government. We don’t care that our word is on the record saying that we’ll listen to people, that we’ll take however long it takes. Our word means nothing. You Liberals here in caucus should all know that. We’re closing it down.”

That, of course, brings us finally to the honourable Dalton McGuinty, now Premier of Ontario, who said on December 19, 2000, “For a government that promised to be open, this closure action is the height of arrogance, the height of exactly everything you campaigned against and you said you were for.” Well, guess what? I will stand here in this House today and say to the Liberal Party, Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Attorney General: This is the height of arrogance. It is the height of exactly everything you campaigned against and said you were for. It is a total disgrace.

1910

I want to just finish with two last points, and I think it’s worth reading into the record—my friend from Niagara Centre, or maybe his leader, today read into the record a couple of passages from Barbara Hall’s letter.

This is Barbara Hall, my friend and my classmate from law school, whom I commended on her appointment to the Ontario Human Rights Commission and who was appointed by this government to that post. She said earlier this week that she was generally content with some of the amendments, or whatever she said. But she wrote a letter today which said this, and I want to just read a few quotes from it:

"[T]he commission has commented on the need for full consultation by the Ministry of the Attorney General." I think she's referring in this next sentence to what I talked about last spring. She says, "What should have been a broad, consensus-building exercise in the best traditions of promoting human rights was undertaken in a way which, instead, caused division within the communities concerned." Doesn't that say a lot, that the person charged with the responsibility of administering this act and protecting human rights in this province, the chief human rights commissioner, says that the way in which the government has handled this is causing divisions within the communities concerned?

She goes on to say "that the committee's hearings," it had been hoped, "would lead to further progress with more common ground being found." That's what we're trying to find too—to listen to people to see if we can find more common ground. She goes on to say, "In particular, there is a need to fine-tune the Attorney General's proposed amendments and to allay fears within the community by making clear the transition from the old system to the new. By bringing an abrupt halt to the proceedings," Ms. Hall goes on to say, "that opportunity is lost; I fear the existing divisions will become more polarized and bitter."

What a great legacy this will be for you, Attorney General, I say through you, Mr. Speaker, to have the existing divisions "become more polarized and bitter;" to have the most vulnerable people in our society, whom you claim to be protecting better through this piece of legislation, in fact saying that you had no time to listen to them.

We have nothing but time here. If we had to sit extra time to hear these people, we have said we will sit in the winter months. You have said, "No. Shut it down. We know best. We don't need to listen to these people. We don't need to hear those most vulnerable people. We don't care that the chief human rights commissioner of the province of Ontario says this is going to lead to bitterness and division in this province," because you're choosing to do this the way that you're doing it.

She concludes the letter by saying this: "On behalf of the commission, I urge you to withdraw the motion for closure. This should be a time to encourage discussion, for consultation and for healing of divisions. All sides share the goal of a stronger, more effective human rights system for Ontarians and care passionately about human rights. It is crucial in this context to seek common ground, for the sake of the people we both serve. Please"—the letter concludes—"let their voices be heard."

Well, I can tell you, speaking on behalf of our party, and I know it's true of the New Democrats—they will speak for themselves—that we too "share the goal of a stronger, more effective human rights system." We too reject the fact that there should be a backlog that lasts for a year and a half, or whatever period of time it is. Changes need to be made.

We are saying, though: Listen to the people who want to be heard. We have people demonstrating their interest and their engagement. Listen to the people who want to be heard and give them a chance to come here and say what they have to say. Maybe they might actually have a valuable contribution to make; in fact, I am certain that they will.

I want to conclude with a little bit more history from the very same day on which—if I could find it here—the new human rights legislation was introduced. In this case, it's a little while later; I guess it's actually the end of the second reading debate, February 22, 1962.

It's very interesting. History always teaches you a lot of lessons about a lot of things, but in this case it shows how it could be done, because the bill I referred to earlier and the reference I made to the speech introducing the Ontario human rights code or whatever they called it—the Ontario Code of Human Rights—then was followed by some very interesting speeches by Mr. Bryden, who was a long-time member of the New Democratic Party. He taught me political science at the University of Toronto—a wonderful man, a totally engaging man. He got up and spoke about the bill and said—you know what he said in his speech? It's interesting. He said, "In introducing the bill, the minister said that he wasn't really changing any principles involved in the bill, but I think he shortchanged himself." He went on to indicate that there were some important principles in a positive sense that had been brought forward by this new bill introduced by the then Progressive Conservative government. This is the critic for the NDP saying this.

Mr. Robarts made the concluding speech on the second reading debate. He was the Premier at the time. He said, "If you go back to the beginning of this type of legislation and the human rights legislation that has been introduced here, I think you will find that over the years, there really has never been a sharp difference of opinion on the underlying principles between the various groups in the House."

He goes on later to conclude, in talking about the very same thing, "I think the hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Wintermeyer), the hon. member for Woodbine (Mr. Bryden), and I all realize that this bill is an important step in what we are trying to achieve. The codification of the act will promote understanding and acceptance of the principles involved in them. What we are really attempting to do is to place education and legal sanctions together...." He then goes on to conclude his speech. What a sad commentary it is that that can be the way they managed to do it in 1962.

In fact, I remember, because I was here, and frankly there was more controversy within our own party—

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): In 1962?

Mr. Tory: In 1982—when Bob Elgie introduced the changes to the Human Rights Code at that time that took huge steps forward in a number of areas of discrimination that became prohibited areas of discrimination, and probably there was more dispute inside our own party—I'm being honest about this—about the wisdom of those things, but ultimately they passed, obviously with the support of the government and with the support of the other parties, because that's how we recognized at that time that you do these things: that you hear people and that you work together as parties to build a consensus so that we can say to the people proudly, "We have moved forward and reformed and improved the human rights legislation of this province, and we've done it through consensus building and by listening to people and getting better ideas as to how we could do things better."

On pieces of legislation like this, the fact of the matter is, there is no division between the three parties about what it is we're trying to achieve. But there are different ideas sometimes as how best one can achieve it, and there are certainly going to be some different opinions about that among members of the public, while they don't differ on the principle involved.

So I say to the government, I made an offer today—and I will conclude on this last note—and for the life of me, I don't understand what's wrong with it. I don't understand what's wrong with it, and the minister didn't answer today and the Premier didn't answer. I said that when we come back in the spring, if they agree to have the hearings that they had agreed to have and that their members had voted to have, and that they placed ads in the paper to have and so forth, that the minister gave his word that we would have—the Attorney General's word was given on this—if they agree to have those hearings, speaking for our party, we will agree to have this matter brought to a vote. And everything that the government talked about being so important today will happen on the first couple of days back, whatever works for the government House leader.

But to me, to adopt the approach that they're adopting now, to bring down the hammer, to jam and ram this through, to completely give the back of the hand to all of these groups of people and all these individuals who want to be heard, I think is a disgrace. It is inconsistent with why we're here, it is inconsistent with how this has been handled in the past in this Legislature when major reforms have been brought about, and I think the government is letting themselves down. I think they are letting the people of Ontario down. I think they are letting down the people who care very much about the human rights legislation. That is why I wanted to speak tonight against this time allocation motion, because I think as a matter of process, as a matter of principle, it is a grave mistake that we will pay for, as said by no one less than, no one other than, the chief human rights commissioner. It will create the kind of bitterness and division she talked about, and we will rue the day that we did it this way.

Mr. Kormos: New Democrats oppose this time allocation motion. We're going to be voting against it. I think it's important that we review some of the history of Bill 107 before the justice committee. I do want to indicate that it was not only a pleasure but a very useful experience to have had Ms. Elliott and Mr. Runciman as Conservative representatives on that committee. I know that they will find some of my recollection of the history of the bill before the committee familiar because, of course, they were involved very actively in subcommittee meetings and in negotiations around ensuring that this bill even got to committee.

Let's understand what the government's obsession was with. It was with Bill 14, the paralegal bill. Let's understand that the government had made a decision to displace Bill 107. It had. Mr. Bryant made a choice. Opposition parties—the Conservatives and the New Democrats—agreed, notwithstanding, again, the tremendous concern around Bill 14—don't think this is the only contentious bill that bears the fingerprints of one Michael Bryant—around which there has been no resolution of the tremendous conflict.

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I recall very, very clearly sitting in subcommittee as well as the House leader's office and talking about the fact that opposition parties worked as much as we had to after the Labour Day holiday to get committee hearings done on Bill 14, to accommodate the people who wanted to speak to Bill 14, and to make our best effort to get it reported back to the House by the time the House began sitting. I also remember some of the inevitable delays, not caused by opposition members but by the incompetence of government members, by government amendments that had to be read into the record that were pages and pages and pages long. The whining and the whinging that took place was incredible. In fact, opposition members, the Conservatives and myself as the New Democratic representative, assisted as best we could and as best the rules allowed to get Bill 14 back to the House for third reading. Were we happy with the result? No, we weren't. But do we understand the process? Yes, we do.

Throughout the very beginning of the summer, the latter part of the spring, there was, of course, discussion around Bill 107. Opposition caucuses—Ms. Elliott, myself, Mr. Runciman—told the government that there was undoubtedly going to be a lengthy list of persons who wanted to be heard with respect to Bill 107 and that we were prepared to begin hearing them when the committee was freed from its responsibilities around Bill 14. The government bizarrely, peculiarly, strangely, with no seeming rationale, insisted that at the beginning of August, we travel to three cities: London, Thunder Bay and Ottawa. I remember opposition members agreeing to sit extended hours in those cities where there was tremendous demand. The opposition members offered to sit extended hours to accommodate the folks in those cities. It was Ottawa, as I recall, that had the lengthiest hearings, although somebody could correct me.

I remember that it was government members who were whining about the travel arrangements. A plane had been chartered. There were actually government members who got to Thunder Bay on the charter plane who wanted to hire commercial flights to come back to Toronto rather than come back on the charter because it was too uncomfortable. I recall suggesting to them that that wouldn't be the most astute thing to do, because I would undoubtedly expect to read about it in a Toronto tabloid the next day. Do you understand what I'm saying? A plane had been chartered, and that, in and of itself isn't unreasonable. It was an uncomfortable—there were two little planes. It wasn't a very comfortable journey. Again, we were accommodating folks in these three cities. And there were government members—dumb as bags of hammers, if you ask me—who were going to buy tickets and then charge them back to the committee to travel home on a commercial flight from Thunder Bay to Toronto. Have I got the two cities right, Ms. Elliott? Yes.

That, in and of itself, is just a story. It's an accurate one. Ms. Elliott, am I wrong?

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby–Ajax): No.

Mr. Kormos: Ms. Elliott replies. Well, let's not have any rewriting of history here. Stalin died over 50 years ago. We shouldn't be rewriting history here at Queen's Park.

We then had House leaders' meetings and discussions—Mr. Wrye will recall that; he's sitting there behind the Speaker's chair—indicating that we expected Bill 107 to be lengthy. We also expressed—we, the opposition members, told the government members, “Are you guys nuts? You're advertising for three days in the beginning of August, and you've got to advertise extensively because you're appealing or addressing an ethnic community, amongst other things, but then you're going to have advertise all over again.”

You see, none of this happened without the government's approval, because the government has the majority of members on the committee. The committee has to approve the subcommittee recommendations. When we were cleared of Bill 14, I remember the subcommittee meetings, and I remember that it was opposition members who suggested to the government, “Let's get moving on this. We've got to get some ads out. We've got to get the legislative broadcast advertising, which doesn't cost anything to do. And let's get going. We've got a list already. Let's not wait for the ads to go out; let's start hearing submissions,” and indeed we did start hearing submissions last week, November 15 and November 16. It was opposition members who suggested that the committee sit to 12:30 rather than the usual hour of 12. Ms. Elliott, is that correct?

Interjection.

Mr. Kormos: We also indicated, opposition members Ms. Elliott and myself—I remember asking Ms. Elliott, “Is it okay?” I know she's got kids. She has three sons who are teenagers now, and she's a very dedicated mother.

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): I'm coming back.

Mr. Kormos: “I'm coming back,” Mr. Zimmer says. I'm sure you are, Mr. Zimmer.

I remember us suggesting to the government, “Let's start our committee hearings—to start dealing with this, four days a week—a week after New Year's Day.” I remember the Chair of the committee—do you remember that, Ms. Elliott? Because if you want to tell what happened, let's tell everything that happened.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): Do we really need to know?

Mr. Kormos: Oh, I think you'll be fascinated. See, the Chair of the committee, one Mr. Dhillon, says, “January is kind of difficult for me.” I said, “Why, Chair, how could that be? Why would January be difficult for you? You're being paid as Chair; surely you can chair the committee.” He said, “I'm supposed to go to India with the Premier.” The Premier is taking a junket to India in January. I said, “Well, Mr. Dhillon”—and I'm sure he is; he's of South Asian background, ethnicity. I said, “That's okay. You don't have to go. Mr. Kular can go.” Mr. Kular is familiar with the region. He said, “Mr. Kular is going.” I went, “Oh.” I said, “Tell you what; maybe Shafiq Qaadri can go.” Mr. Dhillon said, “But Shafiq Qaadri is going too.” And I said, “This is no longer a mini-junket; this is a full-blown, full-fledged junket entourage.” Full-blown, full-flight, junket entourage; taxpayer-funded tours of India. I said, “Mr. Dhillon, surely your responsibilities as Chair of the committee are superior to your interest in going on a junket”—

Mr. Marchese: Transcend.

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Mr. Kormos: —as Mr. Marchese says, “your responsibilities as a Chair transcend your desire to go on a taxpayer-funded junket to India.” Well, somehow, somewhere—and don't tell anybody about the junket, okay? Don't spill the beans. If we can keep it in the room, the third floor won't pick it up; the Sun and those people won't pick up on it. Look, I promise not to tell anybody if you promise not to tell anybody, okay? Speaker, are you in? Shh. Nothing about the junket that would interfere with Mr. Dhillon's ability to—you see, the point I'm trying to make is that Ms. Elliott, with three teenaged boys, was prepared to say, “Notwithstanding that it's the so-called winter break, I'm prepared to spend it here at Queen's Park—four days a week, eight or nine hours a day—listening to submissions.”

That's the way it happened. We made that agreement in the House leader's office. The government member of the committee agreed to it in the subcommittee, didn't he, Ms. Elliott? Why, as recently as last week, the Attorney General was telling you in this House—and I believe the Attorney General because he's no Charlie Harnick. Mr. Hoy understands what I'm saying. The Attorney General said, “Well, we'll keep on meeting and hearing these people and their concerns.” Did you believe him then, Ms. Elliott?

Mrs. Elliott: I certainly did.

Mr. Kormos: She replies. You know what? So did I. I believed the Attorney General. I was amazed, shocked

and awed to learn—don't go away, Mr. Berardinetti; we're going to be talking about you too in just a few minutes. I don't want to do it in your absence.

Mr. Marchese: Are you a member of the committee?

Mr. Kormos: Mr. Marchese says, "Is he a member of the committee?" Yes, that's the whole point. Remember last Wednesday? You wouldn't know that he was a member of the committee, would you, Ms. Elliott?

Just who's playing games here? Because on Wednesday, when Mr. Zimmer, as parliamentary assistant, sat through that committee, when Ms. Elliott sat through that committee and I sat through that committee, we saw five government chairs, one of them empty for the whole day—we're down to four members. We had another chair empty for the largest portion of the day—we're down to three members. Even though there was no music playing, there was musical chairs being played. It makes you wonder just how serious the government was even from the get-go, huh?

I remember the parliamentary assistant bringing to the subcommittee the request to have the minister appear on the first day of committee hearings, and I remember Ms. Elliott and I readily agreeing that we should adjust the agenda to include the Attorney General. It wasn't a matter of showing good faith; it was a matter of simply acting in good faith.

I remember the next request, when Mr. Zimmer, the parliamentary assistant, needed permission to bring the chair of the tribunal to the committee. Opposition members of the subcommittee, Ms. Elliott and I, said, "Well, of course. We'll accommodate. We'll sit later into the lunch hour to make sure that he gets a 30-minute slot rather than the mere 20 minutes that were available."

We know this is a contentious bill. We know that there are some very mixed views about it out there in the province of Ontario. I understand those who advocate for the bill; I understand what they're saying. I happen to disagree. But when New Democrats, along with Conservatives, agreed to sit for however many weeks it would take in the winter break to accommodate those people, we knew we'd be hearing from advocates for the bill as much as we'd be hearing from opponents. And whether it was in Ottawa, Thunder Bay or London, none of which were particularly successful for the government, it just didn't happen that way. I can't recall opposition members being anything other than courteous to advocates for the bill. It was an argument. It was a debate. It was a difference of opinion. As a matter of fact, there are two very different perspectives on how you deal with human rights abuses, how you deal with discrimination in a jurisdiction. New Democrats just happen to believe that the identification of, the detection of, the exposure of, the apprehension of discrimination should be a public function in the public interest.

One of the most capable parallels that I recall speaking to during second reading debate was the comparison of the Human Rights Commission to, let's say, the crown attorney's office. If somebody is a victim of a crime in this province, in this country, you call the police, a public

investigative body; you report a crime. Police do their best to collect evidence, lay a charge, initiate a prosecution, and then a crown attorney has to assess it and determine whether or not there's a reasonable likelihood of conviction—that is the test, isn't it, Attorney General?—and then prosecute it or, in the case of more than a few frustrated victims, explain to victims that there isn't a case here, that there's no reasonable likelihood of conviction. Is that the test, Ms. Elliott? That's the test, as I recall it, for crown attorneys vetting charges.

We still have a private system whereby, if Mr. Marchese has his car stolen, he can litigate. He can sue the thief for conversion. Or should someone assault him, he can sue that person for assault and battery. That's a private exchange in a public forum, in a public courtroom. But it's in the public interest that we prosecute crimes.

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Of course there's consideration of the victim—increasingly, thank goodness. We've seen that evolution in the last short while when we talked about victims' rights, for instance, and ensuring that the role of the victim is not diminished in the course of a public prosecution, in the public interest, of a crime. We New Democrats very much see the Ontario Human Rights Commission as the parallel of that crown attorney's office and police force. Are there huge backlogs in our criminal courts? You bet your boots there are. Could we solve those backlogs by saying, "I'll tell you what: If you're a victim of a crime, don't bother calling the cops and don't bother going to the crown attorney's office. Hire a lawyer and sue for assault and battery, or sue for conversion, or sue for trespass"? That would sure eliminate the backlog, wouldn't it? That would clean up that mess.

But we regard criminal offences to be of such a serious nature that there's a strong public interest in their detection, investigation and prosecution. We don't prosecute criminal cases, crimes against you or you or you, in the specific individual interest of you or you or you; we do it because we have an interest as a community in suppressing crime. That's not to say that judges can't and won't make restitution orders, or that they're not part of probation orders. Any number of things can and do happen.

There is a clear difference of opinion. We're not afraid of the arguments being made on behalf of Bill 107. We're prepared to hear them. We're prepared to hear the proponents of Bill 107 and understand why and how they believe that this is a superior regime. However tedious the prospect might have been, Ms. Elliott and I were prepared to sit for three weeks, four weeks, five weeks listening to them. Why? Because we're gluttons for punishment? No. Because we believe that people have a right to make those submissions. That's why we told the government, "Let's start sitting in January." We've got the winter break. We're coming back March 19. The bill will be ready for third reading by March 19.

The Acting Speaker: If I could interrupt for just one moment, I'd like to introduce Gary Malkowski, a former

member of the House, the member for York East in the 35th Parliament. He served from 1990 to 1995, and he was the first deaf member of this House. I wanted to introduce him while Laurie Scott was there, the member for—

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I'm trying to interpret for him.

The Acting Speaker: I didn't know that she knew sign language. Welcome to the House.

Mr. Kormos: The opposition parties have tried to be very accommodating. Has the government? No.

Let me tell you about John Rae, a submitter to the Bill 107 hearings, who was at the committee last Wednesday, when the Attorney General announced his proposed amendments. We knew, the government knew, that Ontarians with disabilities, people with disabilities, in this province have a strong interest in this bill because of the betrayal they perceive it as being in the context of the ODA that they supported. Mr. Bryant made his announcement. Mr. Rae stood up from the floor and said, "What about me?" Mr. Rae wanted to be able to review the proposed amendments too. They'd been distributed to everybody, but Mr. Rae said, "What about"—you see, Mr. Rae's blind. He needed a version of the amendments that he could read via Braille or in html or text version that he could plug into his computer so that his computer could read it to him because he's blind. He can't read, but he can hear. We raised it in the committee that day, saying—and the Ministry of the Attorney General had staff there: "Please, will you accommodate Mr. Rae? This is about human rights, after all. It is about fighting discrimination, and surely that means fighting discrimination against blind people and ensuring they have access too."

By Thursday, the next day, when Mr. Rae made his presentation, he still hadn't received either a Braille version or an html or text version that he could put into his computer so the computer could read it to him. Not very accommodating, is it? The Ministry of the Attorney General didn't give a tinker's dam about Mr. Rae and his right to be involved in the process. It was simple enough, because when I spoke to Ms. Stokes that afternoon, early afternoon—she's the clerk of the committee. Ms. Stokes, because she's the custodian of submissions, arranged for Mr. Rae to receive an html or a text version of the submission so that he could pop it in his computer or however it got to him; whether it was e-mailed or not. So the clerks' office fulfilled its responsibilities, made sure that Mr. Rae wasn't the victim of discrimination. The Ministry of the Attorney General demonstrated disdain, indifference and downright callousness. They're the one with all the big resources. They've got staff coming out of their yingyangs.

Interjections.

Mr. Kormos: Well, they do. The clerks' office is the opposite; it has the stressed committee budget in terms of advertising and travel. They do. This last round of—what?—110 grand that the government spent on committee hearings that it had no intention of ever holding

didn't exactly help the solvency of the clerks' committee travel budget.

We understand the thrust and parry of adversarial partisan politics; we do. Quite frankly, I think New Democrats can certainly give as well as we take—maybe a little better than most—but we also have a true and genuine and real passion about a bill that has this much significance, that has this much impact, receiving full and thorough consideration, especially when the government agreed. Hogwash, I say to the Attorney General, and I'm being as parliamentary as my vocabulary permits me, when he says that he had to bring in time allocation because Ms. Elliott was going to—what were you going to do? Suspend the committee?

Mrs. Elliott: Part of the reason.

Mr. Kormos: My goodness. I recall exactly what Ms. Elliott proposed. She proposed a method whereby those people who had been denied the opportunity in their submissions to make comments on the proposed amendments be given that opportunity. The Attorney General says that it was back in August, way up in Thunder Bay, that this member from Niagara Centre, a small-town member, a mere backbencher, declared he was going to filibuster the bill.

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Mr. Marchese: What power you've got, Peter. I'm impressed.

Mr. Kormos: Well, it took a long time for the Attorney General to get with it. That was back in the beginning of August. In fact, if people are thoroughly honest and read the Hansard, they'll understand that there was an exchange whereby this backbencher from Niagara Centre—we are, indeed, small-town Ontario and maybe we're not as slick as big-city people. I don't wear expensive suits; I understand that. I don't wear Rolex watches, and I don't have a big fat Mont Blanc pen sitting in my pocket. I don't eat at—I don't know; where do these people eat in Toronto? I don't eat at Prego Della Piazza or Bistro 990. But we do our best.

You see, the whole government theme has been a vilification of the commission. Do you understand what I'm saying? The whole government rationale for this legislation has been a vilification of the commission, trying to create the impression that somebody is incompetent or corrupt. They didn't say who. Is it the front-line staff? Some incredibly outrageous allegations were being made against them. When I confronted one submitter, one Mark Hart—do you remember that one?—with the data from the commission for last year—2005-06, if I remember correctly—Mr. Hart said, "Oh, the commission spins their numbers." "Well, shame on you, Barbara," I said over his shoulder, because Barbara Hall was sitting two rows behind him. I thought, that's interesting. The commission spins their numbers. Let's see what Ms. Hall has to say. I said, "Ms. Hall, do you spin your numbers?" She said, "Of course not."

What's the story here? What's going on? What's the problem with the commission? Is it incompetent staff or incompetent management? It's not a big corporation. It

ain't Weston. There's a pretty small number of people. Is it incompetent commissioners? Which one is incompetent? Ms. Hall? Mr. Norton? Ms. Frazee? Tell us which one. We'd like to know, if that's your allegation, if that's your *raison d'être*.

So New Democrats, with the support of Conservatives, made a modest proposal. We said, "Why don't we get some of these front-line workers in here to the committee?" Because we heard some pretty incredible stories about delays. We said, "Let's get some of these workers in here to find out about the delays."

Then there was a suggestion to get commissioners in, and Mr. Zimmer said, "Let's get all the commissioners in." I said, "Fine." It's what you said, isn't it? And I said, "Fine," or words to that effect. We said, "While we're at it, let's get some managers in here. Let's find out what the hell has been going on there." Then we get the outrageous proposition that the government has to time-allocate this, shut the door on committee hearings, all because the member from Niagara Centre—that's me, by the way, folks—wants all of the staff to appear. Cut the crap. You know damned well that isn't what I wanted, nor what I proposed.

The fact is, your government blocked from the get-go the attendance of any front-line staff members, any OPSEU members. You blocked their participation in this committee hearing. You sure as hell didn't know what they had to say, and you weren't going to let them say it, nor were you going to let managers come. There's something going on here. I'm convinced that this government is apprehensive about what it is that the front-line staff people would have to say—oh, not ones cherry-picked, hand-picked, by the ADM.

Barbara Hall wrote you a letter. Barbara Hall appeals to you. She's your commissioner. If you don't have confidence in her anymore, fire her. That's just so apparent. If you don't have confidence in Ms. Hall, if you're not going to heed her counsel, then fire her. I'm serious. Or are you going to wait till she quits?

Ms. Hall has tried to temper her enthusiasm for Bill 107, but she has made no secret about her support for the fundamental proposal. However, did she blow it when she showed up and said, "By the way, we'd like to see the restoration of appeals," huh? Did she overstep her bounds?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): Probably.

Mr. Kormos: Mr. Runciman says.

"Dear Premier,

"I wish to express my profound dismay at your government's notice to invoke closure and prematurely end debate on Bill 107...."

Look, you can say what you want about us; we expect it, coming from you. You're going to allege everything under the sun, the moon and the stars about us. What do you say about Ms. Hall? What axe is she grinding when she talks about the premature end of debate? Is she full of crap, too, or is she just stupid, or does she not know what she's talking about, or is she trying to filibuster the bill,

or is she trying to obstruct it from getting through the House?

Come on, Attorney General. Why is Ms. Hall calling upon you to avoid the premature end of debate on Bill 107? Has she been turned? Is she some sort of dupe? Are you going to announce some kind of conspiracy theory? You had enough confidence in her to hire her; do you have enough confidence in her to heed her advice?

You're insisting that this bill has had exhaustive debate. Ms. Hall says you're full of bunkum—amongst other things, I presume.

"I urge you to withdraw the motion for closure. This should be a time to encourage discussion, for consultation and for healing of divisions. All sides share the goal of a stronger, more effective human rights system for Ontarians and care passionately about human rights. It is crucial in this context to seek common ground, for the sake of the people we both serve. Please"—please, please, please, Mr. Attorney General—"let their voices be heard," says Barbara Hall, your commissioner, not the assembly's—a hand-picked, partisan appointment.

Say what you will about the motives of opposition members. Tell us what the motive is of Ms. Hall—or is she just corrupt or incompetent, like you're alleging previous commissioners, inherent in your argument, to have been? I don't think so.

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I'd like the Attorney General to come clean. Don't give us that stuff about Kormos promising or threatening to filibuster the committee hearings in August in Thunder Bay when in fact the argument was because one Mr. Berardinetti started to get paranoid about our request to have staff members come up. I said, "Oh, for Pete's sake, get with it. Don't be stupid. We're trying to open the shutters here and get some light on this stuff to find out what the hell is going on." And there was the clear suggestion in his tone that I was going to filibuster. Oh, for Pete's sake. How dumb is a bag of hammers? Useless; dumb as wallpaper. Filibuster, for Pete's sake—the government's got a majority. What's the matter with these people? Read the standing orders. The last effective filibuster in this Legislature was back sometime around 1989, give or take a year.

Suspend the hearings—Ms. Elliott has been as courteous, yet as effective, as engaged, as adversarial yet accommodating, a member of that committee as you could ever want. She's been nothing but productive in her role on the committee. And the absurdity, the embarrassment of your somehow suggesting that, oh, she was trying to bugger up the committee—that is shameful. That warrants an apology. She was doing her job as a committee member. I wish some of your colleagues would do theirs, I say to the Liberals. Start by reading the bill. Then, second, you can start by listening to some of the folks who have concerns about the bill.

Mr. Runciman: Start by listening to your own appointees.

Mr. Kormos: Mr. Runciman notes that you can start by listening to some of your own appointees.

The very first presenter to the committee was Toni Silberman, immediate past chair, Ontario, League for Human Rights of B'nai Brith Canada. She gave an articulate and effective presentation. Like some others, she expressed concern and dismay that she wouldn't have a chance to consider, analyze and then comment on the proposed amendments. On November 21, 2006, she writes expressing "grave concerns regarding the government's motion asking the Legislature to invoke closure on Bill 107...."

"This bill ... has been fraught with difficulty since its inception, including limited and one-sided consultation on its drafting, reluctance to hold hearings into its merits, and the ambush of the democratic process taking place at the hearings by the last-minute introduction of proposed 'amendments.'"

Somehow the Liberals have managed to conjure up a sufficiently high level of arrogance so that everybody is wrong but them; everybody is wrong but the Liberals. I caution you, friends, about hubris.

Let me just speak for a moment—because I've only got a few moments left. By God, I wish—you see, this is the problem. The bill is capable and worthy of some significant and lengthy analysis and discussion in debate. This is what time allocation does. Let's talk about your so-called commitment to set up a services centre. What do you mean? Like the Office of the Worker Adviser, so understaffed, so underresourced that the lineups aren't at the WSIB and WCAT tribunals; the lineups are at the Office of the Worker Adviser—two years, three years, to get your case taken on? You haven't talked once—Ms. Elliott has raised it a dozen times—about the costing of this so-called legal representation. Your legal aid clinics limit and limit and limit the scope of the work they do for people and, of course, impose a means test at the same time. Your legal aid certificate system—bankrupt. Women aren't getting representation in Family Court; they aren't. If any of you think that's funny, I invite you to go down to a provincial court, family division, some day and see the misery that's lined up in those hallways: beaten women, abused women, who can't get representation because the legal aid certificate has a cap on the number of hours and there's a precious few number of family law lawyers with any competence whatsoever who will represent them. In fact, they'll put a cap on the number of hours, because they know they can't do it adequately and in a responsible way. Oh, please. What a stupid sop. You expected people to fall for that? My goodness. You don't give the people of Ontario very much credit; not very much credit at all.

Oh, no—you give them more credit than we thought, because you slammed the door in their face when it comes to committee hearings around Bill 107. You know full well that the current lineup of people wanting to appear in front of that committee could be accommodated during the winter months and this bill could be reported back for third reading, should your government wish it to pass through committee in time for the spring session. There's something going on that you're not talk-

ing about, that you're not telling about, that you're doing your very best to conceal. I think the Attorney General simply cut and run. He can't handle the debate; can't handle it. The Attorney General and the Liberal government embarked on a privatization process, privatizing human rights and human rights advocacy here in the province of Ontario. Opposition parties don't want anything to do with it, nor do a whole lot of Ontarians, and you're afraid of the debate. You won't engage in the debate. You run from the debate. You flee from the debate. You silence those who are critics of your legislation and your policies. And you call yourselves the government of democratic reform and democratic renewal and openness and transparency? I say, shame on you. It's a disgusting moment in the history of this government.

Ms. Scott: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Because Gary Malkowski is here today without a sign language interpreter and because of the closure on Bill 107, which muzzles what is a basic human right, it's shame on you, the Liberal Liberals.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jeff Leal): I'm not sure it's a point of order.

Mr. Kormos: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker: The government knew that persons with disabilities were going to have an interest in this bill. For that reason they ensured that signers and interpreters and other assists and aids were available at committee hearings. I say to you that unless this chamber, in and of itself, unless this assembly is going to be guilty of discrimination against those very same people with disabilities, we should be providing those same resources for persons with disabilities sitting and attempting to be members of this province of Ontario right here and now.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Mr. Kormos: You don't say "further debate"; you rule on my point of order.

The Acting Speaker: It's not a point of order, I tell the member for Niagara South.

Mr. Zimmer: I want to speak more directly to the issue of closure. That's what this debate is all about. This bill has been before this House now for about 200 days, and I think the common ground of all members in this Legislature, from all sides of the House, is that the system as it exists is in real need of reform, and essentially the reform is needed because the system has ground to a halt. We've heard about the backlogs and the difficulty in getting hearings and the long waits. That's not surprising, because the system is 40 years old. Our demographics in Ontario and in Toronto have changed dramatically in the 40 years since the legislation was first introduced. Now, in the year 2006, there is a whole new set of demands from a whole new diverse, ethnic, cultural, religious community out there that has needs for an effective human rights system that can effectively and quickly process their claims. That's what this legislation is all about.

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It's very difficult for members of this House, members of good faith, whether they're on the Liberal side, the

Conservative side or the NDP side, because I think everybody wants to see the system reformed. Certainly in the last 200 days, all of the correspondence that's come in, all of the e-mail traffic that has come in, all of the visits to our various constituency offices from constituents, the debates we've had in this House, the five days of hearings and the ongoing debate since we've completed those five days of hearings all centre around, have a commonality about it, and the commonality is that the system needs to be fixed.

We've had experts in the human rights world come and say that the way to reform the system is to move to what I'll refer to as the direct access model as contemplated in the legislation. There are, of course, experts on the other side of that debate who have appeared and communicated with us, met with us in stakeholder meetings, who have another view, and their view is that the existing system should be modified and adjusted, and that's the best system. What all of those people have in common is a desire to fix the system.

What are these two views that have emerged? There's the direct access view and "maintain the system as it is but"—I'll use the expression—"beef up the current system."

As I've said, I sat through the five days of hearings and I've read through submissions. I've read through the e-mail traffic, and when I read a submission or I hear from one of the expert witnesses, whether it's the former chairs of the commission or the human rights lawyers on one side of the debate, I listen to it and I understand what they're saying. Within the context of the argument they're making, the syllogism of it, it makes sense. When I hear arguments from people who are opposed to our model and I listen to it within the context of their argument and follow the syllogism, it makes sense. So there's our dilemma: We've got good-meaning people on both sides of this debate.

It's my sense that, having been through the five days of hearings and gone through all of the correspondence and so on, if we were to continue the hearing process for another five days, another 30 days, another six months and receive additional submissions for the next few months, at the end of that exercise I dare say what we're going to have is a longer line of people on one side of the debate—that is, the people who support the direct access model as contemplated in this legislation—and we'll have an adding line on the other side of the debate, people who want to beef up the current system.

What does a government do, faced with that sort of a debate that's going on there? A responsibility of government at the end of the day in dealing with these issues is to make choices, to make decisions. That's what the art of government is. When we're thinking about whether we should vote for this closure motion, I think we have to ask ourselves: Are we, as a government, as a Legislature, able to make an informed choice, an informed decision whether to proceed with this legislation or not, or do we need more hearings, more submissions? I would say to this House, this Legislature, that we've heard all of the

arguments. We've heard five days of hearings—and I remember the hearings in Ottawa, London, Thunder Bay, and two days in Toronto. The hearings were structured: There was a supporter of the proposed legislation; there was someone who was critical; there was a supporter of the legislation; there was someone who was critical. And that's how the hearings evolved.

I think, in fairness, if you asked any of the people on that committee—whether they were on the Liberal side or the NDP side or the Conservative side—if they answered the question objectively and fairly, thought the question through, they would have to say to themselves at the end of the day, as I've said, "Do I understand the issue here? Do I understand the pro arguments? Do I understand the contra arguments?" And I do. I think all of us in this Legislature, no matter if we had hearings for another 30 days—there's nothing further to add to the debate.

We're now getting to the point where government has to take the responsibility of making a decision, making a choice. It's time now to close the hearings off. I think, and I can genuinely say on behalf of my Liberal colleagues, that if there was a sense that there was something new that we could learn from continuing with hearings, we'd want to continue with the hearings and hear something new. Tell us something that we haven't already heard. Tell us some theme that hasn't been developed almost ad infinitum. And these themes and these submissions, as I say, are presented by experts on both sides of the debate.

So the government has taken a decision to bring the closure motion and to move ahead, to take a decision by effecting closure and moving on to the next stage. We'll continue the hearings that are set for next week, then we'll go through clause-by-clause, and then it'll come back for a vote. I think a responsible act of the government is to take that decision, make that choice in good faith, knowing that it has all the arguments before it.

The government could certainly, as I've said before, continue with the hearings, but ask yourselves: Is there a greater benefit to be obtained by hearing another 25 or 30 arguments for the proposed legislation and another 30 or 35 arguments against the legislation? What is that continuing hearing process or that continuing debate going to serve? At some point, like most things in life, one gets to the end of the book, and this has been a very thick book with lots of information in it. But I don't think there's anything new to be learned.

That's why we're debating this closure motion: so that we can move on and get the legislation behind us, because the greater benefit is to reform the system and move ahead with it so that the people who have complaints can start having their complaints dealt with quickly, effectively and fairly.

Mrs. Elliott: Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this government's motion to choke off debate on this very important issue respecting human rights in Ontario. I'd like to say that each and every member of this Legislature has a solemn obligation to respect the views and

the rights of all of his or her constituents to the best of his or her ability—all of their constituents, and that includes people with disabilities, people who are members of racial minorities, people who have been victims of discrimination. These are among the people who are the most vulnerable citizens in our society and in our communities, the people who most need our support and protection.

Yet what have we seen from this government? What has this government proposed to do to protect the rights of these people? Nothing; in fact, I would say, worse than nothing, because this is the government that has led these people along—these people who trusted in them to do the right thing and to do the things they said they were going to do—for seven months, promising full public consultation, fair hearings, and open and transparent processes with respect to the changes that they propose to make to our human rights system. Yet what have they done? They've slammed the door in their faces, told them that their views don't matter and to just go away. How can you possibly believe that things could have gotten to this point since April when this matter was first brought before this Legislature?

2020

When this was first raised on April 26, 2006, in this Legislature by the Attorney General, there were numerous complaints from many organizations respecting people with special needs and people who had been the victims of discrimination that they had not been consulted with before this bill was presented. This goes back to a time when the Ontarians with Disabilities Act was proclaimed, which was before my time in the Legislature, but I'm told by these people that they were assured by the Attorney General at the time that they did not need an enforcement mechanism built into the act because the Ontario Human Rights Commission was going to protect them.

Then they were faced with this legislation and felt betrayed. So what happens? Then we go ahead with this. The Attorney General stated in the Legislature on April 26, "We need to continue to have public debate and consultation. That must continue. We will continue to meet with those in the human rights community to get their input as the bill progresses through the Legislature, and I look forward to province-wide public hearings on this bill to take place as soon as possible."

There we have it. We undertook three days of travelling hearings in early August, long days of hearings in London, Ottawa and Thunder Bay, as was rightly pointed out by my colleague the member from Niagara Centre. It was agreed at the time among all the members of the subcommittee of the justice policy committee that we would do our very best to accommodate every person who wanted to make representations before the committee because the matters were so important, so we scheduled very long days in order to be able to do that. Yet, despite that, there were still some people in the London area whose views could not be heard, and we were

assured that they would have time to make their representations in due course. Fine.

We then go through the committee hearings, and I would like to say that at those committee hearings in London, Ottawa and Thunder Bay there were very many presenters—in fact, the overwhelming majority of presenters at that time—who indicated that they did not support Bill 107 and had very cogent reasons for saying so. Even those people in the minority who represented that they were in support of this bill did so with such significant caveats to what they were saying that it was apparent, to some of the members of this committee in any event, that they were not really supporting this bill at all. The pillar in all of this that has been touted by the Attorney General is a legal support centre, and we didn't see anything. All of the presenters—everyone, without exception—indicated that the legal support centre was critical to the success of this bill.

So we went on. Nothing happened. We then hear that this matter is going to be coming before the subcommittee to determine the rules for the Toronto hearing. We meet at the committee. On October 26 we had a subcommittee meeting and ended up with 21 detailed recommendations that the subcommittee wanted to advance before the full committee on justice policy. There was a consensus amongst all the members in the subcommittee that, as we had established by the precedent in Ottawa, Thunder Bay and London, we would do our utmost to accommodate all the presenters who wished to make public presentations to us at the hearings in Toronto. That would include advertising again in all the newspapers at a cost of \$106,000 to taxpayers. Though it's not about money, you have to wonder how this government can so cavalierly toss away \$106,000 of taxpayers' money when they really had no intention of proceeding with these hearings in the first place.

We were prepared to continue these hearings. We were prepared to sit as long as it took to hear from every single person. I hear from the parliamentary assistant that we've heard enough to make a decision. How do we actually know we've heard enough until we actually hear from the people who want to make presentations? How can we presume to know what every single person is going to say with respect to this matter?

Nonetheless, we proceed to the subcommittee. Then we hear on November 14, the day before the presentations are supposed to commence, that the Attorney General wants to appear before the committee on November 15. In the spirit of accommodating everyone who wants to appear before the committee, Mr. Kormos, the member from Niagara Centre, and I agreed: Of course the Attorney General should be able to appear before the committee. The Attorney General, after talking to the press at length about the dozens of amendments that he proposes to make, shows up at the committee with a four-page background document of little substance. He talks about the proposed amendments, doesn't actually say what he intends to say, and uses a lot of magic buzzwords that people want to hear because they want to

believe that he is going to do what he says he's going to do here. But the actual facts speak for themselves. The Attorney General says he's going to establish a human rights legal support centre and entrench it in the legislation and that he's going to fund the legal support centre.

It became apparent to me, as we proceeded to hear the first presenters, on November 15 and 16, that there was a huge amount of confusion among not only the members of the subcommittee but the presenters who were appearing before the committee about what this actually meant, in the face of the Attorney General's comments that he was prepared to look at some amendments but was not prepared to put any more money into the system. Well, how can you have a full legal support centre without committing significant money to the system? It just flies in the face of any kind of logic to expect that the members of the committee, the presenters who wanted to appear before the committee and the people of Ontario would actually believe that.

Because of my concern about the degree of confusion and because of the concern that the presenters have a right to know what it is that the Attorney General is proposing, I suggested in the committee that we suspend the committee hearings until the full text of the amendments became available—in fairness to the presenters—which is not what the Attorney General said in this Legislature. He said half of what the truth was here. He said half of it: that I wanted to suspend the consultations. Nothing could be further from the truth. What I wanted was for every person to have an opportunity, knowing the full text of the amendments and knowing what the Attorney General's full intentions were.

I know that many of my colleagues want to speak to this, but I would also like to say that one of the significant presentations that we heard was from Ms. Toni Silberman, from the League for Human Rights of B'nai Brith, who was the first presenter after the Attorney General appeared before the committee. I would like to quote from a letter that she has written to Premier McGuinty, of today's date:

"In a highly unusual gesture, the Attorney General introduced proposed changes to Bill 107 mere minutes before the Toronto hearings began last Wednesday. We were scheduled as the first presenters, and were therefore unduly prejudiced by this action—an action which effectively removed the existing bill from the table and replaced it with a revised bill. A subsequent technical briefing delivered by Ministry of the Attorney General's staff confirmed our fears that the amendments were not, in fact, amendments, but further amorphous promises with neither the fullness of thought nor the wherewithal necessary to implement them."

I couldn't say it any better myself, and that's what I was attempting to express to the committee and to the Attorney General through the parliamentary assistant: that it was essential, because the Attorney General was stating to the members of the committee that he wanted to make these amendments, that we should know exactly

what the amendments were saying. Numerous other presenters agreed with that. But probably the most telling of all are the comments made by the current commissioner, Ms. Barbara Hall, also in a letter of today's date, to the Premier. Sections of her letter have been quoted, but there's another section that I think is quite important here:

"It may seem trite to remind you that justice must not only be done, but must be seen to be done. This is an essential truth within the law and, particularly, in regard to human rights. Such rights have come to form the foundation of our democratic principles. There are those who will see your actions as a denial of those principles."

It has been said that one of the marks of a civilized society is the respect and protection it affords to its most vulnerable citizens. Well, this government has demonstrated very clearly that it does not respect our vulnerable citizens and has betrayed their trust not once, but twice: in failing, first of all, to consult with those people who will be most affected by this legislation before bringing forward this bill as they promised, and secondly, in choking off the debate and failing to hear from all of the people who have something to say with respect to this bill, thereby committing a double betrayal.

This is a very dark day in Ontario's history if this motion is passed: the day that this government turned its back on our most vulnerable citizens.

2030

Mr. David Orazietti (Sault Ste. Marie): I'm pleased to join in the debate this evening on the closure motion with respect to Bill 107, a piece of legislation long overdue to be passed in the province of Ontario. I want to commend the Attorney General for his efforts in bringing this piece of legislation forward and for his willingness for broad consultation to take place on this bill. As a member of the standing committee on justice policy, I had the direct pleasure of listening to many of the concerns expressed by those individuals who appeared before the committee.

I want to say a couple of things this evening. First of all, our government is moving forward to reform legislation that has fundamentally remained unchanged in 44 years. Reports have been done, evidence has been gathered, recommendations have been made, and past governments—both Conservative and NDP governments—failed to act on these recommendations, on these reports, to move forward on much-needed human rights reform in the province of Ontario.

Today the opposition parties suggest that there has not been broad enough consultation, that there has not been enough discussion about the changes needed to move forward with Ontario human rights reforms. I want to say otherwise, and I'm going to reference some of the speakers who both appeared at committee and who have also given their endorsements to Bill 107.

Let's take a minute to check the facts, first of all, on the system that we've got in place today, and what that means to Ontarians trying to get their human rights issues dealt with and addressed. The commission takes an

average of about 2,500 cases per year. The commission refers to the tribunal, on average, 50 to 100 cases per year. The commission provides legal support to only 50 to 100 of those cases, a far cry from the 2,500 a year that are submitted.

The average length of time for a case to be referred to the tribunal is three to four years. The Attorney General said it this afternoon: Justice delayed is justice denied. There's no justice at all for many of these people. The average length of a hearing is one year. Therefore, the average length of time, from filing to resolution before the tribunal, is four to five years. I don't know how anyone in this Legislature could possibly think that that was fair and swift justice for many of these people who have very serious human rights complaints.

On average, 30% of cases closed by the commission are dismissed. Investigations done by the commission are then redone by tribunal lawyers, if a case goes to the tribunal.

Eighty-seven per cent of the commission's budget is spent on processing, mediating, investigating and litigating complaints. It's no wonder it takes four to five years.

Commission decisions to dismiss a case provide only broad written reasons and sometimes no reasons at all. Parties cannot appear before the commission to present their case. It's very problematic in terms of the present operations of the commission.

Previous governments commissioned studies, which were then ignored, and both parties cut funding to the commission when they were in government. Our government will stand behind recommendations that have been made for more than a decade.

Let me share with you some of the comments of a few of the presenters who appeared during hearings last week. With respect, the Association of Human Rights Lawyers, Mr. Mark Hart, appeared before the committee and he said this:

"The current state of affairs is completely unacceptable and is notorious to anyone who actually works on the front lines of the current system, as we in the association do. This horrendous situation has not gone unnoticed.

"In 1992, a report was released by a blue ribbon task force headed by Mary Cornish, who's in the front row today. She's one of the most prominent human rights lawyers in this province. The task force also included leading human rights advocates from racialized groups, the disability community, the lesbian and gay community and the First Nations community. This task force crossed the province and heard from everyone who wanted to speak. Giving careful and deliberate consideration to all they heard, this task force recommended that the existing human rights process be substantially reformed and replaced with a system where human rights claimants have direct access to a hearing at the tribunal with publicly supported legal representation available to them, which is precisely the model we see before us in Bill 107."

That's what Mr. Hart said.

"In the year 2000, another blue-ribbon task force, this time headed by Justice La Forest, formerly of the Supreme Court of Canada, released a report to reform the federal human rights system, which is the same as the one in Ontario. This task force crossed the entire country again and heard from everyone who wanted to speak on the issue and came to the same conclusions as the Cornish task force.

"The plight of human rights claimants in this province has not gone unnoticed by the international community as well, which, in 1998, condemned Canada and this province for its backward and paternalistic human rights system and urged Canada and this province to guarantee that human rights claimants have access to a hearing.

"Through all these years, the association and the many vulnerable clients we represent," according to Mr. Hart, "have watched and waited as governments came and went and still no action was taken on human rights reform.

"Now, finally and at long last, Bill 107 provides us with a golden opportunity to achieve what so many have been studying and recommending and advocating for so many years."

What do we have today? We have opposition members standing up and saying, "Let's drag this process on and on and on"—more process.

"If anyone thinks that the current system is still working"—this is what Mr. Hart said at committee hearings, the committee hearings we had, unlike the Conservative Party, which barely held hearings on anything. I think it's fairly obvious that there's a difference there. "If anyone thinks that the current system is still working, I'd ask that you take a moment to sit with one of our clients to hear about the devastation they felt when, after they've pursued their complaint through the commission's process for so many years, they got tossed out with this little slip of paper with this inscrutable reasoning.

"Bill 107 will fix this by getting rid of the commission veto over whether or not claimants are entitled to a hearing and ensuring that all claims get filed with the tribunal and have access to a hearing, where the claimant will actually get to interact with the decision-maker, participate in the process and understand why their case wins or loses." It sounds fairly straightforward. I can't understand the opposition to doing this.

"The next significant problem in the commission is the inordinate and inexcusable delay. You've heard about this, I'm sure, from your constituents, many, many times." I know I have in our constituency office, about the human rights commission and the present process. "The delays are horrendous at the commission, and I'm sure there are a lot of statistics thrown around that you may have heard of and may yet hear of at this committee hearing. The significant one for our clients is that when a case goes to investigation, the average time it takes for the commission to deal with the case is three years: That's the average time. I have represented clients where the cases have taken six, eight, or even 10 or more years," if you can believe that, to go through this process.

Yet I hear opposition members suggesting, "Let's delay and delay and delay and delay the process of this bill."

"We are here to say"—here's what Mr. Hart said, so you should listen to what Mr. Hart said, not me. Mr. Hart said this: "We are here to say to this committee today that the fundamental structure of Bill 107 is sound and is in keeping with the recommendations of the reports which have studied these issues and is consistent with our international obligations."

"We are aware that there are some who disagree, some who have been our colleagues in the human rights community over the years, and we have seen the so-called blueprint for reform which is being promulgated by David Lepofsky and two other dissenters. No doubt you will hear about this blueprint in submissions to come. I like to call this blueprint 'two steps backwards.'" That's how Mr. Hart refers to it.

It goes on and on. It's quite easy to continue to refer to presenters who have come before the committee to indicate their support for Bill 107.

According to Mr. Hart, "Read the Cornish report, read the La Forest report, and see how Bill 107 embodies the recommendations and will repair and reinvigorate the human rights system in this province and make it a beacon for other jurisdictions struggling with the same problems."

A number of other presentations were made: Mr. Raj Anand, the former chief commissioner; the Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights in Ontario; a former commissioner, Mr. Tom Warner, who added his comments to the discussion and also endorsed Bill 107.

The time to act is now.

John Fraser, executive director for the Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation, said, "The move to a model where all complaints can proceed to the Human Rights Tribunal with publicly funded legal supports, and where the commission can focus on what it does best—public education, research, advocacy and public interest complaints—is a huge step forward. In our view, Bill 107 could produce one of the most advanced and progressive human rights systems in the world." Yet we get delay, delay, delay from the opposition.

2040

Michael Gottheil, chair of the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario, also presented.

Ruth Carey, executive director of the HIV and AIDS Legal Clinic: "I applaud the Attorney General's legislation to reform human rights. Human rights and community groups have asked for this for many years. We welcome this government's commitment to human rights."

Lorne Sossin, a law professor at the University of Toronto: "Reform of the human rights system is long overdue...."

"Given the discussions that gave rise to this set of proposals and the many studies and consultations that have preceded this round, it is difficult to imagine any views on this matter remain hidden." Yet that's what we hear from the opposition tonight: "Let's delay and delay

and delay." We stand here to talk about making important changes to the Ontario Human Rights Commission, and members suggest that we've not listening to stakeholders out there. I read stakeholder after stakeholder who has been consulted who endorses the bill, yet we get those kinds of comments from the opposition. I'm not sure where they're coming from. It's just bizarre sometimes.

Robert Sexsmith, secretary of the board of directors: "We want to applaud this undertaking ... made in the Legislature to establish a new human rights legal support center that would provide real assistance to claimants at each stage of the new process."

I could go on and on. Jessica Carfagnini of the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres executive committee: "Our centre was relieved to see the Attorney General's introduction of Bill 107 and that this government will be proceeding with long-outstanding human rights reforms to include the right of direct access to a hearing."

There are pages and pages of recommendations by stakeholders in this province who have said it is time to move on. Opposing the closure motion for the sake of opposing the closure motion is, in my mind, against the interests of Ontarians who have said time and again, "Listen to the reports. We're happy to see a government that's showing leadership on the human rights issue in Ontario, that didn't just produce some expensive report, shelve it and go on to make excuses as to why they're not acting on this legislation."

I want to commend the Attorney General and our government for showing leadership on reforming Ontario human rights, something that hasn't been done fundamentally in 44 years. It's long overdue. Let's get on with it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Further debate? The member from down east—Brockville.

Mr. Runciman: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that introduction from the Chair.

It was interesting to listening to the Liberal member from Sault Ste. Marie talking about the opposition. Not once did he reference the very serious concerns of the Liberal-appointed chair of the Human Rights Commission, Barbara Hall, whose letter was read in the House today by the leader of the third party and by John Tory as well. They're trying to ignore the existence of the heart-felt concern of the individual they felt was qualified to serve as chair of the Human Rights Commission.

I want to say a couple of quick things about the folks who have been speaking out in opposition. We hear those stories about "delay, delay," which is not the case at all, Mr. Speaker, as you know. Our Progressive Conservative representative from Whitby-Ajax is Christine Elliott, who's a relatively new member to this assembly but has been doing an outstanding job speaking out on behalf of many people concerned about this legislation and all Ontarians; she has done just a magnificent job. The House leader for the third party, Mr. Kormos, Niagara Centre: One of the pleasures, if there are pleasures, of going back into opposition after eight and a half years in

government has been the opportunity to work with him and sit in committee with him. He has developed his own persona around this place. There's no question about it. He doesn't wear a jacket, doesn't wear a tie. He can be a wee bit outrageous at times. But I tell you, from an opposition perspective, I don't think too many members can say that he doesn't make an enormous contribution to this place in keeping the government on its toes, and I applaud him for that. This is another case in point where he has once again outlined the concerns.

I'm not going to talk about the bill. I haven't sat in on the hearings. I sat in on some of the Ottawa hearings, but that's about it. I want to talk about the process here and what's happening with this government and the way they're approaching this issue.

I think this is essentially about integrity, about honesty. We heard the Attorney General in the House today. This is just another case in point of members of this government taking liberties with the truth. My colleague Ms. Elliott talked about this, where the Attorney General got up to defend what they're doing here and talked about Ms. Elliott, the member from Whitby-Ajax, wanting to suspend the hearings. Mr. Speaker, there are certain words I can't use in this place, but what an atrocious example. This is the chief law officer of the crown getting up and making a statement like that, suggesting that Ms. Elliott was in agreement with the stoppage of these hearings and not allowing hundreds of people to appear, people who have every right to make their concerns known. He was suggesting, implying, that we were in support of that and that Ms. Elliott, our critic, was in support of that. That's completely false, and I think it reflects badly on the office of the Attorney General.

The House leader of the third party and I have been around this place a long time, and I don't think we've witnessed the kind of performance we've witnessed from this individual in terms of an Attorney General. We talked about the passing of Ian Scott. We sat in this House with Ian Scott. We sat in this House with so many honourable people—Roy McMurtry—people who have filled that role as Attorney General with dignity, with respect for all members of this place. What we've seen from this Attorney General on so many occasions is that kind of partisan rhetoric—not just partisan, but going over the line with allegations like those he made with respect to the member from Whitby-Ajax, which is truly unfortunate. It does this place no good. It does all of us as honourable members no good. This Attorney General has nothing to be proud of. We were baffled, as House leaders, when we went through these discussions. He blames us for this. Well, the reality is that he seems to—I call Mr. McGuinty and his Attorney General the Laurel and Hardy of Ontario politics. McGuinty, as Laurel, is always saying to the Attorney General, "This is another fine mess you've gotten us into, Ollie; another fine mess you've gotten us into." And it's one mess after another, not just for the members of the government but for the

people impacted by the messes the Attorney General creates.

I guess we have to surmise that this is the creation of some kind of legacy, that the Attorney General wants some kind of legacy when he leaves this place. He doesn't want it just to be pit bulls. As the leader of the thirty party mentioned, we think we heard more witnesses on pit bull legislation than this Attorney General is allowing with respect to this very significant foundation legislation for Ontario dealing with human rights for everybody in this province. He gives more time to pit bulls. That's the reality and of course he's embarrassed by it. So what does he want to do? And then he blames us for this and for Bill 14. We talked about this also, trying to have agreements as well with respect to paralegals. We said, "Bring in stand-alone paralegal legislation and we can deal with it in a timely way." What does he do? This legacy builder throws everything but the kitchen sink into an omnibus bill, which creates all sorts of difficulties for every member of this Legislature in terms of coping with this. We did it in an agreeable way, with negotiations with the House leader of the government, and then at the end of the day, what do they do? They bring in over 100 amendments again. This is the kind of operation the Attorney General and the McGuinty Liberal government is operating. They don't know what they're doing. They don't know what they're doing from one day to the next.

He blames everybody else for it. He talks about our critic causing the problem and the House leader for the NDP causing the problem. It's not his fault and there's no responsibility on his part. That's the message we hear over and over again from this Liberal government. When anything ever goes wrong, "It's not our responsibility. Oh, we took advice from experts." But then when you ask them who those experts were, of course they will not reveal the names of experts. What does that say about honesty and integrity? The Premier gets up and says, "Well, now it's my responsibility," once the heat was on with respect to coal-fired generation. They were blaming it on experts, and we want to know who those experts are. The Premier tries to deflect by saying, "No, it's really my responsibility." Well, were there any experts? Our critic for energy, Mr. Yakabuski, has posed this question on a number of occasions: "Were there any experts?" I think there's a serious doubt that there were any experts. This is another fabrication on the part of the Liberal government of Ontario, led by one Dalton McGuinty, who has to assume complete responsibility for the lack of honesty and integrity in this Liberal government.

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Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): Certainly, it has been a very interesting evening, with lots of good debate. I sit on the standing committee for justice policy. It's a real honour to sit with the members from Whitby-Ajax and Niagara Centre and my colleagues.

As we discuss the whole issue of human rights and the code, I still think it's wonderful and an absolute honour

to be able to sit and discuss that and debate it. We're in a country and in a province where we can do that. We have human rights here, something that a lot of people in this world don't even enjoy. I think that is a real privilege, so I want to thank all the members of the standing committee for that opportunity. I think it's a privilege and an honour to sit with all of you.

But along with that honour and that democratic right comes responsibility. The responsibility of a government and of standing committees is to come to a point of going beyond the debate and going beyond the hearing and starting to make decisions, because if we don't come to a point of making decisions, then we are in danger of becoming inactive as a government, and possibly even being paralyzed.

I have certainly heard many different sides to the debate. We've heard from many people, and I think honestly we've heard both sides quite well. I think we need to come to that point where we need to start debating what we've heard and we need to start moving forward with the amendments and the decision-making process.

One of the things I'm really particularly, not so much concerned, but something that I think I have learned in listening to people, including when we travelled from London and Ottawa and Thunder Bay—I heard from my own constituents in London about things. I heard about things such as the delays that were taking place, and the amount of time. What I really had a sense of was that a lot of people didn't have a sense that they had any real control, that they gave this over to the commission and they basically gave up control of their complaint at that stage, that they had to wait and had no way of knowing what was happening with it or how it was moving forward. At the end, when they did have a decision on this whole process, it was a decision for them. It didn't make any systemic change. Certainly, a number of people have individual complaints and the ruling is for them and it addresses their issue. But I think a lot of times what I heard from a lot of people was that they were representing others as well, and when they won a decision, it was for themselves, but it didn't change the system.

One of the things that this bill will do is free the commission to deal with systemic problems. I think that's a very important thing to have happen. There is really nothing to be gained by forcing citizens to go one after another with the same complaint, trying to win one-offs all the time. When people come forward and they have an issue and they win, it should mean that the entire system is examined, to make sure that it doesn't happen to other people. How often do we hear people say they go through this so that no one else will have to? Yet that's exactly what this system, as it currently stands, forces them to do.

So I want to see this move forward. I think we need to move. When we say that justice delayed is justice denied, I think we have to take that very seriously as legislators. We need to move forward. We need to provide that justice. We need to provide those human rights for our citizens.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member for Halton.

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant, Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity. We even look alike sometimes.

I appreciate the opportunity to address the government's time allocation of this proposed legislation, Bill 107. I took a look at Hansard, going back four years ago. I don't know whether the Attorney General will recall. On September 30, 2002, Mr. Bryant spoke out against the time allocation motion, at that time calling it a "guillotine motion." We see somewhat of a transformation in this minister of the crown, now our Attorney General. Essentially, four years later, we have an Attorney General who has stolen some pages from the book of Maximilien Robespierre of French Revolution fame, sending public debate on a flawed bill to its fate under the guillotine. I will point out that Robespierre himself was guillotined, allegedly face-up. Can you imagine how that would feel to have the blade come down and you are forced to watch it come down?

So this change of heart on closure indicates to me that the McGuinty Liberals will basically say anything, whether it's true or not, if they think they can get an extra vote or ram through or jam through this kind of legislation. We all know this is the case. Anything will be said if required. I suggest that we have members opposite who may pay lip service during a campaign for greater protection of some of the rights that we're talking about but will vote no on something like this.

This is where we see what I consider a fallacy on democracy and human rights in this case, coming from the McGuinty Liberal government. Prior to election, Liberals opposed time allocation; today they support time allocation. They claim to support human rights but refuse to listen to input on actually improving their human rights legislation.

I give an example of another bill. This was last month. Bill 57 was a private member's bill put forward by myself which proposed amendments to the Ontario Human Rights Code. If passed, it would have restored property rights not only to landowners but also tenants in the province of Ontario. When it came down to the vote, I was pleased to see that several members of the NDP joined forces with the opposition to vote in favour of land rights and responsibilities. It was neither a left nor a right issue. It seemed to be an issue where members opposite were coerced, if you will, to vote against that bill and to vote against what I consider and what much of rural Ontario, land-owning Ontario, would consider an important amendment to the human rights code. So I'm very disappointed that this particular piece of legislation is being rammed through. Very simply, I'm disappointed.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): Let me start by saying that the government doesn't have the luxury of choosing between human rights reform without time allocation versus human rights reform with time

allocation. There's really only one option here under the current circumstances.

There's no question, if you look at the history of this reform and if you look at the history of this bill, that there has been no amendment to the human rights complaint system in 44 years. The leader of the official opposition was right to say that the code has been amended, and it has. He mentioned that Mr. Elgie amended it; Attorney General Scott also amended it. But he referred quite proudly to Premier Robarts's creation of the human rights system. It was a proud moment for his party, it was a proud moment for Ontario and it was a proud moment for Canada when Premier Robarts created it. But since then, there has been no change to the system.

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It's also interesting that the leader of the official opposition would talk about the way things worked, I think he said, in 1982. He was referring to the way they did it in 1982 and the amendment of the Conservative member who amended the code at that time. It doesn't work that way around here anymore. I sat in justice committee beside Mr. Kormos when I was in the opposition, and I learned a lot; I did. Mr. Kormos has a particular perspective on history as to what happened to this place and to the committee system. Up until 1990 and the way things worked up until 1990—and I'll let him speak for himself—it worked; it seemed to work. There was a certain consensus that was achieved. After 1990, he told the rookie MPP from St. Paul's sitting in opposition beside him in justice committee—I remember Mr. Kormos saying to me, "I wish you had been here when it worked well. I wish you'd been here when you saw that the committee system worked well and when you saw that the parliamentary system worked well." The member for Niagara Centre said that with some sincerity.

I live in the here and now, and this is the reality that we have under the current standing orders. Everything about this reform for the last 44 years has been about cutting and running. There were task forces occasionally, studies occasionally, but never a bill before the House, and certainly never a bill before the House that was passed.

The foundation legislation that the official opposition refers to: Believe me, if we look back to 1990, if we're going to take modern parliamentary history, the amount of debate and committee hearings for this bill more than exceeds the bar set for foundation legislation, as set by NDP and Conservative governments. This more than exceeds any review of the number of days of the second reading debate, third reading debate and committees for foundation legislation under the Conservative government.

The member for Niagara Centre may correct me if I'm wrong, but I don't ever remember a single bill between 1999 and 2003 where the justice committee had hearings for more than eight days. Maybe there was one; I don't think so. In any event, committee hearings took place last summer after the bill was introduced in the spring and after there were, I believe, two full days of second read-

ing debate. There were committee hearings in London, a full day on August 8; in Ottawa, a full day on August 9; and in Thunder Bay, a full day on August 10. On November 15, we had committee hearings that were extended by an hour. On November 16, committee hearings were extended by an hour; on November 22, I understand the committee hearings will be extended by an hour; on November 23, committee hearings as well; then on November 29, clause-by-clause hearings; and then back to the House for third reading debate.

I remember in 2003, when I was sitting over there, there were time allocation motions by the Conservatives where there were no committee hearings—zero—and no third reading debate. I understand that prior to 1990, not having third reading debate was not all that unusual, but that was after an agreement was made on second reading debate and on committee hearings.

Is the system working right now as it might? I don't know. But in the history of this reform, there is no question that it is either that we see this bill through and bring it to a vote or it will never happen. The New Democratic Party does not support this bill and it will do everything it can to derail this bill. It will do everything it can to stop this bill from passing. They will do that. The government at some point has to say, "Do we want this bill to go to the Legislature for a vote, or are we going to blame the NDP for not getting the bill passed?" Well, no—we want this legislation to come to the floor for a vote so that we can say to the people who go to the human rights system in the future that it's a system they can be proud of.

You didn't hear anything about those people tonight in the debate; you didn't hear anything about the people who come to the commission and years later find themselves without justice. You didn't hear about Stephanie Payne and her experience before the commission that she talked about this morning: 10 years. Can you imagine? You feel that you're a victim of discrimination, you go to the commission for relief, and 10 years later? If that isn't revictimizing victims, I don't know what is.

Suvania Shiu: Eight and a half years. She made a complaint to the commission in 1995; dismissed in 2004. She said she spent over \$50,000 to fight the commission; she said herself she was revictimized by the commission.

There are thousands of people who go to the commission every year. They don't see justice within a year, typically, and that's wrong. That's wrong. They should get relief. Back when the system was created 44 years ago, the idea was and Premier Robarts's vision was this: It is not good enough that people go to the courts only to get remedies for discrimination. In other words, 50 years ago, if you found yourself a victim of discrimination, what would you do? You'd have to retain counsel yourself at your own expense, you'd go to the courts, take your chance with the Superior Court, with no necessary expertise, and sue them under tort law. So no expertise, no assistance and, in many cases, no justice. So they created a system where you could go to the human rights system, you would get assistance, you would get legal

advice, you would get expertise and you would get a result—and typically you'd get a result within a year. And it continued. It worked in the 1960s.

I heard from a commission counsel who worked in the 1970s for the Human Rights Commission and he said it worked then, too. What happened, I heard again and again, is that over the years—1960s, 1970s, 1980s and 1990s—decisions came down and process upon process was built up, it became more and more adjudicative until the point where you may have had the right to a lot of process when you went to the human rights system, but there was no remedy. There is no remedy and there is no justice.

We say that justice delayed is justice denied, and we say it in debates such as this, but what does it mean, really? What does that mean, "Justice delayed is justice denied"? It means for Stephanie Payne that she feels she's a victim of discrimination, she goes to the human rights system and nothing happens after one year, then two years, then three years, then four years, then five years, then six years, then seven years, then eight years and more. No justice; no justice.

This is a process where somebody can go to the human rights system and within a year you can get a result. That's justice.

I read with great interest the following remarks—

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): And you're the Attorney General? You're the Attorney General for how long? Three years of inaction. Come on.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Timmins–James Bay, this is a debate. We're going to try to listen to the Attorney General. Can we do that?

Mr. Bisson: Oh, he's the AG. I'm sorry; I didn't realize.

The Acting Speaker: There will be no other warning. That's it.

The Attorney General.

Hon. Mr. Bryant: In the House, the following is said, and I take this from Hansard: "When I announced measures to clear the backlog of cases at the Ontario Human Rights Commission, I also gave a firm commitment to review the Ontario Human Rights Code. Clearing the backlog of cases is absolutely critical to providing justice to complainants who have waited far too long. But the backlog is symptomatic of a more fundamental problem: outdated enforcement procedures that cannot respond to the increasing and complex cases of today." Do you know who said this, Speaker? I didn't say this.

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Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): You just did.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, what's going on? We're trying to hear the Attorney General, okay? Can we do that?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: I didn't say those words. I didn't talk about the outdated enforcement procedures. It was the Honourable Elaine Ziemba. Do you know who said that? It was the Minister of Citizenship in 1991 for the NDP government. They knew then, when they were in

government, about the problems of the human rights system. They yuk and they guffaw and goof it up over there, but they had a chance to make a difference. They had a chance to make a change. They had a chance to deal with the backlog, a backlog "symptomatic of a more fundamental problem." So what did they do? They had a task force. Oh, a task force. As it turned out, it was a good one. It was a very good task force. Mary Cornish headed it up. It was extensive and exhaustive, and they came forth with recommendations. They called for a direct access system and they called for the empowerment of the Human Rights Commission. The NDP government took Mary Cornish's report and the speech of the Honourable Ms. Ziemba of the New Democratic Party and they shelved it. They didn't do anything. They didn't introduce a bill; they didn't do anything. They ducked. That one was going to be too much trouble, I guess. Forget about the fact that their own minister said there was a systemic problem with backlogs and a systemic problem with procedures. They ducked it.

There were more inquiries and task forces. The La Forest commission went across the country to canvass Canadians about the state of human rights complaints. Then of course we in this House—occasionally the New Democratic Party asked questions about it when they were in opposition. I think they did.

So then we have an opportunity with this bill, presented to the House, to finally reform the human rights system. And what happened? We've had debate, we've had public hearings and we've heard all sides. The New Democratic Party just said they don't support it. They think it's a step backwards.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): And it is.

Hon. Mr. Bryant: They say it is. They've had their say. They've had their say again, and they'll have their say again and again and again and again and again. But at some point we have to come back to this House and not continue the delay and not continue justice denied, but finally, for the sake of those thousands of people who go before the human rights system and get no justice and for the sake of those thousands and thousands and thousands of people to whom the Human Rights Commission, if this bill passes, will be able to reach out and make systemic claims on behalf of—it is for those people that we need to bring this matter forward to a vote. It is for those people, who deserve a better human rights system, a human rights system that Premier Robarts started 44 years ago and that the McGuinty government is changing and improving for a better human rights—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the member from Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean–Carleton): It's my pleasure to join this debate tonight. I want to congratulate my colleague, my very good friend Christine Elliott, for shepherding this through for the Conservative Party tonight, because she's been working very hard since both of us were elected. I want to applaud her.

I want to thank my leader, John Tory, for reminding this Legislature—even though he and my colleague Christine Elliott's words have been grossly distorted by the minister, who has suggested that our party has no legacy on human rights in this province and in this country. That is absolutely false, whether we're talking about John Robarts, John George Diefenbaker or the current Senate Speaker in the Parliament of Canada, Senator Noël Kinsella, who is Canada's foremost human rights lawyer and advocate.

I also want to say thank you to my good friend, my colleague from Leeds–Grenville, who is a man of unimpeachable integrity and I think has added an enormous amount to this debate tonight.

But what I'm concerned about is that this McGuinty government has once again decided, since I've been here in this very short time, to force legislation through without public consultation. It makes people, especially new members like myself and the member from Whitby–Ajax and my new colleague from Toronto, very cynical. What is especially shameful is that not only is this government shutting down public debate, but they have also not tabled the amendments they have drafted. Sure, they've given some vague statements of what it's going to be about, but let's be clear: The consultation is being shut down and the major amendments to this act have not been made public and have not been provided to the opposition members. No one, no member of the public, knows what this legislation will look like at the end of the debate.

I have a very short time here, so what I'm going to do is speak for the people that they won't speak to. Close to 200 people want to speak to this legislation whom they're ignoring. They spent almost \$106,000 on advertising, and now they're telling people not to show up for consultation. The gall of this government to not have a simultaneous interpreter tonight for the people who actually have human rights—but they're not being met tonight by this government.

I'm going to mention their names: Catherine Dunphy and David Lepofsky of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Alliance; Avvy Go of the Metro Toronto Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic; Margaret Parsons and Royland Moriah of the African Canadian Legal Clinic; Emily Noble, president of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario; Orville Endicott and Dawn Roper of Community Living Ontario; Nancy Schular and Seema Shaw of the Ontario Disability Support Plan Action Coalition; Malcolm Buchanan of Civil Rights in Public Education; Steven Adler of the Canadian Jewish Congress; and Rosalyn Forrester of the Canadian Transsexuals Fight for Rights. Those are some of the 200-plus people in this province who have not had an opportunity to speak to this legislation, and they have a right to. Unfortunately, the people across the way are

ignoring that fundamental right to speak to legislation that should be the centrepiece of all human rights in this province. You're not affording them the fundamental right that they should have to speak to this legislation. In fact, the McGuinty Liberals' decision to prevent those individuals from expressing their views on human rights is not only an affront to our democracy but it's contrary, quite ironically, to what this legislation is supposed to be about.

In the very short time I have left, I want to close by saying something that the chief government whip once said: "Stop this closure stuff. Let's get on with business and consult with the people. Let them have input into this piece of legislation."

The Acting Speaker: Ms. Dombrowsky has moved government notice of motion 248. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

Those in favour, say "aye."

Those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2118 to 2128.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Gerretsen, John	Oraziotti, David
Bentley, Christopher	Hoy, Pat	Parsons, Ernie
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jeffrey, Linda	Peters, Steve
Bradley, James J.	Kular, Kuldip	Qaadri, Shafiq
Brownell, Jim	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramal, Khalil
Bryant, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Caplan, David	Levac, Dave	Sergio, Mario
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Matthews, Deborah	Smith, Monique
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Smitherman, George
Dombrowsky, Leona	Milloy, John	Van Bommel, Maria
Duguid, Brad	Mitchell, Carol	Wilkinson, John
Fonseca, Peter	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Zimmer, David

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Barrett, Toby	Klees, Frank	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Runciman, Robert W.
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLeod, Lisa	Scott, Laurie
DiNovo, Cheri	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
Elliott, Christine	Martel, Shelley	Tory, John
Hampton, Howard	Martiniuk, Gerry	Wilson, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Norm	Yakabuski, John
Horwath, Andrea	Murdoch, Bill	

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): The ayes are 36; the nays are 23.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It being past 9:30 p.m., this House stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 2131.

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No. 124A

N° 124A

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 22 November 2006

Mercredi 22 novembre 2006



Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 22 November 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 22 novembre 2006

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I have tabled a private member's resolution for debate tomorrow in the Legislature in response to the growing concern from residents, families, staff and long-term-care home operators over the recently introduced Liberal Long-Term Care Homes Act, Bill 140. They fear that Bill 140 will put a 10-year deadline on older nursing homes' operating licences without any plan or funding commitment for the capital renewal of older B and C beds, where 35,000 residents live. In fact, after seven years, the government can decide to do anything it wants with these beds, including closures or moving the beds to other communities. This has created uncertainty for the residents.

Furthermore, without a funding commitment or a plan for capital renewal on the part of the Liberal government, these residents will continue to live in three- and four-bed wards, with no ensuite bathrooms or wheelchair accessibility throughout the home. These homes only meet 1972 design standards.

Our government, on the other hand, undertook a plan of action in 1998 to invest \$2.1 billion in long-term-care homes so that residents could live in comfort and dignity. These homes met new 1998 design standards. We built 20,000 new long-term-care homes. We rebuilt 16,000 of the province's oldest beds to meet the new standards. I urge this government to take action on behalf of our vulnerable citizens.

GREY CUP

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I say this reluctantly but respectfully: Congratulations are due to the 2006 Grey Cup champion BC Lions for their 25-14 win over the Alouettes last weekend.

While Toronto football fans are feeling the disappointment of the Argonaut loss in the final game of the CFL East, it's now time for the people of Toronto to start looking ahead to the 2007 Grey Cup. We look forward to coach Pinball Clemons leading our Argos to the championship, but we should also start getting excited about

the fact that the location for the 2007 Grey Cup game will be none other than here in the city of Toronto. This is a great opportunity for Ontario's capital to showcase itself to the rest of Canada. It will be a great opportunity for Torontonians to come together to welcome Canadians from coast to coast as they come to our city to celebrate this great Canadian tradition.

The theme of the 2007 Grey Cup will be Over the Top in Toronto. Work has already begun on the Over the Top festival, which builds excitement in the days leading up to the Grey Cup game itself. I can't talk about the details yet, but this may be the biggest party Toronto has ever seen. It will be an experience for the whole family. Come enjoy a piece of Canadian history and culture and an opportunity to partake in a celebration unlike any we've seen before.

I'm confident the Grey Cup celebration 2007 will be the best celebration in the 95-year history of this great game. I say to the people of Ontario and the people of Toronto, it's time to start getting excited about the 2007 Grey Cup game in Toronto.

GEORGE LESLIE MACKAY

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I am pleased to stand today to talk about an Oxford county hero, Reverend George Leslie Mackay.

Reverend Mackay was raised in Zorra, in the north end of Oxford county. In 1872, he traveled to Taiwan as a missionary, where he became known as the Black-Bearded Barbarian. Eventually, he won over the locals, not only with his preaching, but his work healing the sick and practising dentistry. Over 20 years he extracted more than 21,000 teeth.

During a visit home, he tried to raise funds to build a school in Taiwan at a cost of about \$4,000. In 1881, through the leadership of Reverend Mackay and the Woodstock Sentinel Review editor, people came together from Oxford county and the surrounding area. Together, they raised over \$6,000. In honour of Reverend Mackay and the generosity of Oxford, the school was named Oxford College, and it still exists as a successful university today.

During his time in Taiwan, Mackay established over 60 chapels, several schools and a hospital. He remains a national hero in Taiwan. His work has created a strong connection between the people of Oxford and the people of Taiwan.

Several years ago, the university that Mackay founded honoured Oxford county by presenting them a statue of

Mackay. Reverend Mackay is being honoured in a Rogers OMNI documentary, which will air this Saturday, November 25. I encourage everyone to take the time to watch the documentary and learn about this legendary man from Oxford county.

CANCER SCREENING

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): The dismal news today that Canada can't participate in a clinical cancer trial because most provinces don't pay for Avastin, a cancer drug for colorectal cancer patients, means provinces like Ontario, which refuse to fund this drug, have an added responsibility to screen for it so it can be detected and treated early on.

I'm concerned about the ongoing delay in establishing a screening program in Ontario. In March 2004, Cancer Care Ontario began a one-year screening pilot project using the fecal occult blood test. The main objective was to compare the participation rates of eligible individuals who were recruited for screening through a public health program or a primary care physician. The key findings were completed in February of 2005, and CCO submitted its final report to the Ministry of Health at the end of March 2006.

I would have hoped after a year of study, CCO would have come up with the most effective screening model to recruit eligible patients. So I was very surprised that on October 16, the Minister of Health said the model he got didn't have the level of physician involvement needed to get the best results from a screening program. I can only hope this matter gets sorted out very soon and a screening program gets under way.

Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer in Ontario: 3,000 Ontarians died from it last year. If detected early, the cancer is 90% curable. Given that Ontario refuses to fund Avastin for advanced colorectal cancer, it's more critical than ever to screen and detect this cancer long before a serious treatment regime is ever required.

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YEAR OF THE WAR BRIDE

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): A few months ago, our government hosted a reception here at Queen's Park celebrating 2006 as the Year of the War Bride. At this reception, war brides and their families gathered to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the arrival of over 45,000 war brides and the contributions they made to our great province.

It is my pleasure to tell all members of the House here today that celebrations continue in my riding of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh. On Friday, November 17, I was fortunate enough to be present at a special art exhibit at Sue's Art Gallery. Entitled War Brides on Canvas, the exhibit was organized by six local artists who showcased numerous pieces of stunning art featuring 11 war brides from in and around the Cornwall area. I

wish to take a moment to congratulate the artists of the Focus Art group: Charlene Bennett, Patricia Campbell, Rose Desnoyers, Patricia Fish, Jacqueline Milner and Micheline Tanguay are to be commended for embracing this initiative and contributing to the commemoration of the Year of the War Bride.

The war brides themselves are to be commended. They have helped to shape this province and continue to play an active role. My constituency assistant, Jeremy Gowsell, has had the chance to participate in several events with local war brides, including riding with them to Toronto to participate in that event this past year. He has continued to be impressed by their charm, their goodwill and their incredible stories. Certainly, go on the war brides website and you can read about and understand those incredible stories.

It is my pleasure to support these wonderful ladies and join with them in celebrating 2006 as the Year of the War Bride here in Ontario. I wish the war brides well in their continuing celebrations during this year, and I certainly appreciate the efforts that Bea Surgeson from my riding has made to profile the war brides here in Ontario.

CONSIDERATION OF BILL 107

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby-Ajax): I'd like to speak just for a moment about integrity, and in this specific case the lack of integrity shown by this Liberal government with respect to Bill 107, and the lack of respect that they've shown to the members of this Legislature and to the hundreds of presenters who've been lined up to speak to this matter for several months. For several months, they've been led along by this government in the expectation that they would have a fair hearing before the justice policy committee. Actually, up until November 20, all of us in this Legislature and all of the presenters were under the impression that they would have this opportunity, before this government last night brought down the guillotine and choked off the debate on this fundamental issue so important to all of Ontarians.

Not only that; there haven't been just procedural problems here. There are substantive issues and there's a lack of integrity shown here, issues around the so-called amendments that have been presented to the committee. In fact, they're not amendments at all. One of the significant presenters, Ms. Toni Silberman, called them "vague, amorphous promises." I couldn't agree more.

There has been a lack of clarity with respect to these amendments, because in actual fact I don't think they even know yet what they want to do with some of these things. They're leading us along, hoping that somehow a solution is going to be found, to the detriment of the people of Ontario.

SENIOR ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): On Tuesday morning I had the honour and privilege of attending the Ontario Senior

Achievement Awards, held by the Lieutenant Governor here at Queen's Park. The Ontario Senior Achievement Awards are an opportunity for us to recognize the many contributions seniors continue to make to Ontario. This year, we honoured 21 seniors from across the province for a variety of achievements. These Ontarians come from many places and from all walks of life, but they do have one thing in common: They've each spent a lifetime contributing to Ontario, from serving in the armed forces to volunteering in their communities, to encouraging governments to take action on specific needs.

One of the honourees was from my own riding of Brant, Doug Snooks. Doug worked for almost four years as chair of the Eagle Place seniors' centre to get a chair-lift for that centre. When he started his quest, there were 51 members of the seniors' centre. Many of them had difficulty climbing the stairs to the second floor of the building, and some couldn't attend the meeting at all. Doug knocked on doors, petitioned the city and worked with city staff, city councillors, the mayor and myself. He was unsuccessful in the early going, but he kept pushing until Eagle Place got even more than he asked for: an elevator and much-needed renovations to the seniors' centre. Now a whole review of older buildings has been requested to complete the road to accessibility for all seniors and all of our citizens.

Doug Snooks's efforts are just one example of what the senior achievement awards are all about. Thank you, Doug, and thank you to the 20 other extraordinary seniors that we celebrated on Tuesday.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I rise today to congratulate Ontarians on their job creation record during the last three years. In that time, the hard-working people of this province have created 250,000 net new jobs. Our government is doing its job to position Ontario as a world leader in the knowledge economy. That's why our Reaching Higher plan calls for an historic \$6.2-billion investment in post-secondary education—benefiting institutions like the University of Toronto at Mississauga—so that Ontario workers will be the best educated in the world. That's why Ontario has made record investments in health care at Trillium, at Credit Valley and at William Osler, because we understand that strengthening our greatest competitive advantage, our people, is good for our economy. That's why Ontario has used our \$500-million strategic auto sector investment fund to leverage some \$7 billion in new auto industry investments in Ontario—because ours is a race to the top, not the bottom.

The Premier led a trade mission to China last year. This year he's leading one to India and Pakistan. That's why our Minister of Economic Development and Trade is going to Alberta. Our leaders lead by example. They get out there and build opportunity for Ontario businesses, Ontario organizations and Ontario families so that we can be leading edge, now, next year and for decades to come.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): I rise in the House today to speak as a proud northerner. I fight every day to represent the interests of northern Ontario and my constituents in Nipissing. As a government, we are helping the forestry sector invest in the innovative transformation required to compete in today's market. That's why we are providing over \$1 billion in financial support. This government understands that there are serious challenges facing the forestry sector during this transition. That is why on Monday we announced \$140 million for forestry rebates that could reduce the electricity costs of participating companies by 15%.

The wood products that come out of Ontario are a world-class commodity, and you couldn't find a more dedicated workforce than you will find right here in Ontario. I see it every day when I am at home in North Bay and visiting Mattawa in my riding. Families and towns have built themselves around the forestry industry. These are some of the hardest-working people out there. We recognize that, and that is why our government is committed to the sustainability and competitiveness of the forestry sector.

Progress is being made. We have applications in now that would lead to over \$1.2 billion in new investments in Ontario's forestry sector. That tells us there's confidence in the industry and things are not all gloom and doom as the members opposite would like to you believe. The Minister of Natural Resources, together with many of his cabinet colleagues, has been working tirelessly on this file. Together with the sector, we are working to secure the future of hard-working families in northern Ontario and all of Ontario.

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INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PROTECTING VULNERABLE WORKERS ACT (EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES), 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR LA PROTECTION DES TRAVAILLEURS VULNÉRABLES (AGENCES DE PLACEMENT)

Mr. Dhillon moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 161, An Act respecting employment agencies /
Projet de loi 161, Loi concernant les agences de placement.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Mr. Vic Dhillon (Brampton West—Mississauga): Many of my constituents face a considerable amount of abuse as a result of employment agencies that operate in my riding. I'm very unhappy with some of the activities that are taking place, so I am introducing this bill, whose purpose is to establish a licensing scheme for the control and regulation of businesses that operate as employment

agencies. That term is defined in the bill. "Employment agency" means both businesses that bring together employees seeking jobs and potential employers and temporary help agencies that contract out persons to organizations.

WORKPLACE SAFETY
AND INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT
(INDEXING), 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA SÉCURITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE ET
L'ASSURANCE CONTRE LES ACCIDENTS
DU TRAVAIL (INDEXATION)

Ms. Horwath moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 162, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 / Projet de loi 162, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): This is following up on an activity of a couple days ago, when we raised the issue of the untenable position that injured workers are in with the erosion of their payments as a result of inflation because the indexing that they need to make sure their benefits are able to withstand inflation is not in place.

What the bill does is index two types of payments that are received by injured workers. It amends the act to enable annual cost-of-living increases to WSIB compensation paid to injured workers in Ontario by removing the existing reduced indexing factor. This bill also provides for the unreduced indexing factor to apply to all payments made on or after January 1, 1994. If any payment made to a person on or after that date was less than the amount that would have been paid using the unreduced indexing factor, the board must pay the difference to the person.

The short title is Workplace Safety and Insurance Amendment Act (Indexing), 2006. I expect every member, including the minister—

Interjection.

The Speaker: The Minister of Labour will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker: The Minister of Health will come to order.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House

Leader): I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business. I'll see if I can get our people to agree to this.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I move that notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following change be made to the ballot list of private members' public business: Mr. Tory and Mr. Murdoch exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Murdoch assumes ballot item 65 and Mr. Tory assumes ballot item 70, and that, pursuant to standing order 96(g), notice be waived for ballot item 65.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CONSIDERATION OF BILL 107

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Acting Premier. Mr. McGuinty and your government used the parliamentary majority you have to bring the guillotine down on the committee hearings on Bill 107, a fundamental piece of legislation regarding the Ontario Human Rights Commission. This was done despite the promises and repeated assurances, some of them in writing, from the Attorney General that he would let debate happen for "however long it takes."

I want to know why the government decided to break this promise, to go back on the word of the Attorney General. Why couldn't they, for example, keep the commitments that were made in writing to Margaret Parsons and others that hearings would be held over the course of the winter, and why couldn't the government live up to the commitments in advertisements, at significant public expense, that appear today in the *Globe and Mail*, the *Toronto Star* and the *National Post*, among other places? Why did you go back on your word and break your promise to listen to these people on a piece of legislation of this importance?

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I guess it's obvious to anyone who is joining the debate that the leader of the official opposition has now made himself an expert on the matter of guillotine motions, recognizing that no one has been more expert at this practice than the party he is privileged to lead. The list of those motions and issues that were brought forward is really quite extraordinary.

What we know about the issue at hand is that it's a fundamental issue. It's critically important and, accordingly, has had the advantage of very considerable debate already. More than 40 hours have been dedicated to it; 70 presentations; a wide variety of opportunities for individuals to make their views known. There are, obviously, differing points of view, and I think it's an appropriate opportunity for the legislative committee to be able to

work through a variety of amendments that may come forward with a view toward strengthening the bill and bringing it back here for yet further debate.

Our government is very pleased with the progress that's been made, and the debate and the opportunities that have been presented. We think it's time to move on on this fundamental issue.

Mr. Tory: It's interesting to me that when the Acting Premier or others bring up the past, they sort of suggest it was wrong then but it's okay now.

I think the reason Premier McGuinty and the Acting Premier won't stand up and admit to is that they've made a political calculation that it's actually easier and better for them to muzzle people who are interested in this legislation, muzzle people who, in many cases, are vulnerable and marginalized and just want to be heard, than it is to hear them speak. It's very odd that that would be the case when we're talking about human rights legislation, and I suggest that is the wrong decision.

David Lepofsky calls it "a blistering betrayal." Mohamed Boudjenane of the Canadian Arab Federation calls it "anti-democratic." Barbara Hall, a good friend of the Acting Premier, says, "What should have been a broad consensus-building exercise ... was undertaken in a way which ... caused division within the communities concerned."

We agree. Reform is needed, but this government is going about it in the wrong way.

Acting Premier, yesterday we made an offer of co-operation to let the committee hearings continue as planned and then to let this matter come to a vote when we come back here in March. Why would you not accept that offer of compromise and co-operation on human rights legislation?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The honourable member has effectively got himself wrapped up in the discussion about process today, but in using the word "vulnerable," the honourable member doesn't manage to find any empathy for those people who have waited too long for the justice associated with appropriate action of these bodies.

He speaks about an individual as an example; he names David Lepofsky. This is an example of an individual we all have a tremendous amount of respect for. That's why I had breakfast with him on this issue.

The point is, over a long period of time there has been an opportunity for people to make their views known in a variety of settings and forums. Those views are well expressed already, through the wide variety of presentations at committee and presentations that have come in the form of submissions and letters to all of us individually, and most certainly to our colleague the Attorney General. Accordingly, it's appropriate that we give the legislative committee the opportunity to work through a series of amendments, which will be brought forward from a variety of perspectives, reflecting an opportunity to strengthen the bill and bring it back to the House for yet further debate—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tory: I'm delighted to hear that the Acting Premier had breakfast with Mr. Lepofsky, and that's great, except it does nothing at all for the hundreds of other people who want to be heard on this.

We just finished saying—I said it last night and again today—that we agree reform is needed. What we're arguing about here is that people want to be heard on this bill and you won't let them be heard. It's an insult, frankly, that you won't even address the offer of co-operation that was made about bringing this to a vote after people are heard. This is an area where we have to show we can listen and co-operate with each other if we deserve to be called leaders.

1400

June Callwood wrote to the Premier today. She said that she supports reform and that she has some concerns about the bill which she thought would be addressed at committee. She goes on to say, "I beg you, I urge you, to reschedule the hearings."

I will ask you again: Will you accept our offer to have this matter brought to a vote in the first couple of days when the House resumes the week of March 19, 2007, in return for hearing the people who want to be heard on this human rights legislation? We could undo the travesty of last night with unanimous consent right now. Why won't you do it?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: It's only through action that we can undo the travesty, which is that they're pretending to be interested in an issue that for eight and a half years they ignored. In fact, their only action on this file was to reduce the amount of resources available for those people who needed legal assistance. That is the legacy of your party.

Just take, as an example, the comments of June Callwood: What did you say? How did you characterize it? You said that she thought the committee was the place where some of the concerns she has will have the opportunity to be addressed, and indeed that is the way the process works. The honourable member wants to talk and talk and substitute process for action. Instead, we think it's important to give the legislative committee an opportunity to consider amendments from a variety of perspectives, which will give advantage to a stronger bill. I look forward as a member to have the opportunity in this House to stand and vote on third reading in advance of reform and action, not more process and talk, for which the honourable member opposite has now become the standard-bearer.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): Once again to the Deputy Premier: I noticed that never once in that dissertation from you did we hear the word "listen," because you don't know how and you don't want to, on this or any other issue.

Let's talk about another matter. Here we have déjà vu all over again on another issue. Almost exactly a month

ago, we stood in this House and asked questions about serious allegations concerning the integrity of the lottery system operated by the lottery and gaming commission. At the time, we asked for an independent forensic audit into the operations of the OLGC after it was revealed that an impossibly high number of lottery insiders had won prizes of more than \$50,000. Premier McGuinty refused to have that independent audit. Four weeks later, we now have allegations of nearly 10% of scratch-and-win prizes being collected by lottery insiders, 65 jackpots totalling \$10.7 million, with none of that information being made public at all—ever. Will the Deputy Premier admit finally that it's time to have an outside, independent forensic audit to get to the bottom of this?

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): To the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I want the member and all Ontarians to know that this government treats these and any other allegations as very serious matters. That's why, in fact, we have an independent officer of this Legislature, the Ombudsman, looking into the security of the lottery system, and I eagerly await the work that he has undertaken.

In addition to that, the chair of the board, Mr. Gough, supported by all members of this Legislature to assume that very important responsibility, is conducting a review. He has undertaken KPMG—I hope you're familiar with that firm—to conduct a forensic audit and investigation, to do the appropriate investigation and analysis, and to report back as soon as possible. Every member of this Legislature should have total confidence that I will take the appropriate action to protect the public interest and to protect the integrity of the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp.

Mr. Tory: Mr. Gough is a fine gentleman; I've known him for years. The problem you've got here is that he's investigating the corporation of which he's the chairman. That's the problem here.

Interjection.

Mr. Tory: He's hired them; he's their client. What silliness is this? You don't understand.

Here is what we have in the latest—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. I will not warn the Minister of Health again.

Mr. Tory: Here's what we have in the last instalment. CBC gets documents about the lottery corporation through freedom of information. CBC tries to interview Duncan Brown and they're physically ejected from the property. Mr. Brown reconsiders, and in the interview he finally agrees to give, he says that he's never seen this documentation ever before.

These things have happened on the watch of all three political parties. It goes back to 1993 or something like that. It is not about politics; it is about the integrity of lotteries, the integrity of the tickets, and being able to satisfy the buying public. Why won't you order an

outside independent forensic audit instead of asking this company to investigate itself? Why won't you do that?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I am a little bit surprised that Mr. Tory has no confidence in KPMG, one of Canada's leading audit firms. In fact, I know that Mr. Tory has used KPMG to do the annual reports for Rogers Communications. In fact, KPMG is also the audit firm for the Ontario PC fund.

So I think that Mr. Tory, on one hand, engages a firm which has an excellent reputation, which is able to do that. Mr. Gough, on behalf of the shareholders, the people of Ontario, engages KPMG to do this kind of work. Also, in addition to that, we have an independent officer of this Legislature with full authority and power to conduct the kind of review to get to the bottom of the matter and to move as quickly as possible to provide some insight, because whatever action needs to be taken, I want to assure this member and all Ontarians, will be taken to protect the public interest.

Mr. Tory: KPMG is a fine firm, but if the shareholders are going to retain them on an independent basis to investigate the lottery corporation, it should be you who are retaining them on behalf of the shareholders and not the corporation itself. You don't understand. They are going to submit their report to the very people who are being investigated here, or who should be.

What I'm trying to do is hold you to account here for the failure to take this seriously enough and to put in place the independent, outside investigation done by the shareholder, which is you, not the chairman of the board. The measures as announced last month are not going to address this scratch ticket situation. It was never addressed at all. Mr. Brown assured us that everything had been done.

The OLGC provides a billion dollars in funding to arts and culture groups, not-for-profit groups, hospitals, schools and so on. They are the people who are going to take it in the ear if you don't act on this. You have an obligation to protect the integrity of this system. Why won't you order that independent audit and do it now?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: In fact, we don't have just one but we have two independent—one is an officer of this Legislature who has shown himself to be a tireless advocate and to do some excellent work. I have full confidence.

I'm surprised that Mr. Tory and the Conservative caucus do not have confidence in André Marin, an officer of this Legislature charged with these responsibilities who is undertaking this kind of work. I am shocked that Mr. Tory and the Conservative caucus do not have faith and confidence in their own party's auditor, who is conducting the kind of forensic review which he calls for.

In fact, Mr. Brown and OLG came out with a seven-point plan to protect security and to provide the confidence of Ontarians, be they shareholders or be they lottery players, in the lottery system. I want to assure Mr. Tory, I want to assure this House and all Ontarians that if further actions are required, they will be taken to protect the public interest.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Acting Premier.

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): Deputy.

Mr. Hampton: Deputy Premier, two days ago, the Premier was patting himself on the back over his too little, too late one-cent electricity rebate for paper mills. Today, northern Ontario communities learned just how weak the Premier's announcement really is. In the two days since the announcement, Bowater and Tembec, two companies that were happy to appear with the Premier, have announced mill closures or more job cuts. These are on top of the 45,000 direct and indirect forest sector jobs already destroyed under the McGuinty government.

Deputy Premier, if the Premier's one-penny electricity rebate is just what the doctor ordered, according to the Premier, how come forest sector companies are already laying off more workers?

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I want to say to the honourable member that I think it is his strategy typically to take a wide variety effort, a comprehensive response and approach to the challenges we are all conscious of related to the forestry sector, and shrug off another billion dollars. This is really, in a certain sense, what is the heart and the culture of the party he represents: to diminish the efforts that have been made and to appropriately acknowledge that it's going to take a significant effort on the part of all partners, I dare say including the federal government, to ensure that the sector moves forward in a way that is strong.

We know it faces many challenges. That's why on a comprehensive basis our government has responded this week with an additional resource with respect to the challenges of energy cost, and previous initiatives that have outlaid a serious amount of provincial investment, to send a very strong message about our desire to work in partnership with all of those who agree that it's important to make sure that Ontario has a strong and stable forestry sector. There is of course significant work to be done, acknowledging very—

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The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: The Deputy Premier talks about other investments. This government keeps talking about \$500 million in assistance. Only 3% of that \$500 million has been taken up by the industry. That's what they think of your so-called announcements.

This morning the McGuinty government let those working families down again in another crass exercise in media spin. The Minister of Natural Resources had the nerve to say that northern forest sector communities have gotten off relatively scot-free. Tell that to the 45,000 workers who are out of a job under the McGuinty government. That shows just how out of touch you are.

I think the McGuinty government owes northern Ontario forest sector workers and communities an apology for this crass exercise in media spin. Deputy Premier, when will those laid-off forest sector workers get that apology from the McGuinty government?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: One would only have to spend a week around this place to fail to hold to appropriate suspicion any comment offered by the honourable member that didn't come with a transcript. I think the evidence of the minister's commitment and our government's commitment to people employed by or benefiting from the economic advantage of the forestry sector is the fact that, as a government, we have contributed over \$1 billion to ensure that it is there in the future.

An example of the challenge we have with the honourable member's information is that in his first question he talked about a new announcement from Tembec when in fact the only announcement which is new is that Tembec has announced that they're reopening for eight weeks.

The circumstances are clear. We have a challenging circumstance in the north and in the forestry sector. We're working very co-operatively and proactively to provide resources that will ensure that the sector is able to move forward on a more stable basis. We recognize there are many challenges and we commit to continue to work together in partnership—

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: The Deputy Premier talks about working together. The only thing that is resulting from the McGuinty government's work on this file is that more workers are being laid off.

Here's what happened in Thunder Bay the next day after the Premier's announcement: Bowater sends a letter to its workers about a site-wide restructuring that would mean more job reductions; not new jobs, not mill reopenings, not job restoration—more job cuts. I ask the Deputy Premier this question again: If the Premier's forest sector announcement is "just what the doctor ordered," according to the Premier, if northern Ontario is getting off scot-free, how come Bowater and Tembec are announcing more job cuts immediately after the Premier's announcement?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: There he goes again. Even in the course of the two questions he's asked, he's made it up. He has chosen to use different language to characterize what he presented as a quote. This is exactly what we expect all the time from the leader of the third party. He talks about Tembec, yet he's not prepared to acknowledge that Tembec has made an announcement about people coming back to work for a period of time.

With respect to Bowater, there is no presentation from the honourable member that acknowledges that in partnership, respecting the fact that we have made resources available to the forestry sector to assist them in transforming their operations so they're viable in the long term, Bowater has been a participant in that, signalling their desire to move forward and provide important and stable employment for people.

We're working together on that basis with \$1 billion in provincial investment to demonstrate our commitment to the people in these communities.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr. Hampton: Every time the Deputy Premier opens his mouth on these issues it demonstrates once again just how out of touch the McGuinty government is. I've got the Tembec press release. They're going to reopen for a brief period because they've got timber rotting in their yard. But it says in the press release that as soon as that timber is sawn, they're not going to just lay off the workers, they're going to give them termination notices, meaning no more job.

I say again to the members of the McGuinty government: What does it say about the Premier's latest forest sector announcement, where he patted himself on the back, and just after he made the announcement, Tembec announced that these workers are going to be terminated?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The honourable member wants to read one line but not the rest of it. Tembec also committed, as they work to enhance market conditions and circumstances, about their dedication toward the mill's reopening. We want to work in partnership with those who have a vision for an environment for a sector that is more positive.

Only the honourable member can pretend his way through this as he does. Very many days he likes to talk about how Ontario, as an example, is the only jurisdiction facing these circumstances, when we know that very recently in Quebec 10 sawmill closures were made.

The point is, we know there are very serious circumstances for the forestry sector. The demonstration of our commitment is the comprehensive response we have engaged in, not just one announcement with respect to energy but also serious commitment on our part to address the costs associated with getting timber out of the bush, and also with resources to allow these organizations to make investments that will ensure that their productivity is enhanced and that costs are lowered. This is the dedication we have to the forestry sector, and we will continue—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: The McGuinty government uses words like "making it up." So I want to quote the Ontario Forest Industries Association, where it says it "doesn't know of any mill that will reopen as a result" of your scheme. The Communications, Energy and Paperworkers say your scheme won't save a single job in forestry. Today's Thunder Bay Chronicle-Journal says, "Clearly, what McGuinty offered ... is not enough," and calls the Premier's forestry policies "pale in comparison with demonstrated need and obvious solutions."

Industry leaders, union leaders and municipal leaders said they needed \$45 a megawatt hour in order to sustain the industry. Can you tell us why the McGuinty government, after all this deliberation, after all the media spin, couldn't deliver \$45 a megawatt hour, couldn't even get close?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The honourable member doesn't quote Ken Buchanan, president of Buchanan

Forest Products, who said, "This is great news for Ontario's forest sector. It helps us stay competitive. It will keep jobs in the north. This is good for our industry and a 'win' for the communities in the region."

We acknowledge there are serious challenges with this industry. We've been working very diligently over a period of time with affected communities and the companies that are there. We recognize there are international challenges and that there are things we can do. Accordingly, we've sought to be a strong partner, not like the federal government sitting on the sidelines and doing nothing to help this sector, but working very vigorously to bring \$1 billion of resource forward, to support lower energy costs, to support organizations that transform themselves to lower operating costs and be more competitive, to support reduction in costs with bringing the product in from the bush.

We recognize these challenges. We stand in solidarity with those individuals who are affected, and we will continue, as a government, to move forward with initiatives—

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: The McGuinty government says it stands in solidarity with those workers. You've destroyed 45,000 of their jobs and you're busy destroying more of those jobs on a daily basis.

Here's what the chief of northern economics at Lakehead University had to say about the Premier's announcement: "I don't think this is going to do very much." Here is what the Chronicle-Journal newspaper said: "Lest anyone think McGuinty's announcement will make 'the big difference' to that industry, one read of the devastating memo Bowater sent to its Thunder Bay employees the same day McGuinty flew into town dispels the notion in a hurry."

Deputy Premier, one way to make a difference for northern Ontario forest workers is to pass today's NDP opposition day motion, which calls for a job protection commissioner to sustain jobs and a reasonable hydro policy that can sustain jobs. My question is, will members of the McGuinty government support our opposition day motion, or are you going to let these workers down again and destroy more—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Deputy Premier?

1420

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: We'll let all members speak for themselves on the issue of the vote, but coming from the honourable member, now he's turned his ever-changing energy policy into a reasonable one. This is the umbrella that he seeks to operate under, because he changes his position on this point, as my colleague the Minister of Energy has said often.

He likes to quote from professors. Well, here's a quote from Michael Power: "We think on balance this will make a big difference and allow us to move forward on other fronts to ensure that we remain competitive."

The point is that we're working hard with the forestry sector in northern Ontario, recognizing the challenges

that they face. We've been prepared, point by point by point, to work together and to meet the challenges. We will continue, through the leadership of our colleague the Minister of Natural Resources, through the work of the Minister of Energy, through the leadership of the Premier and our colleague the Minister of Economic Development, with a view towards making sure that we move forward in a fashion which sustains our forestry sector and, in a very competitive environment, ensures that it's there to provide important stability for people in the north and other parts of Ontario.

CONSIDERATION OF BILL 107

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby–Ajax): My question is for the Deputy Premier. Today, in one of the last few remaining hearings of the justice policy committee on Bill 107 before the debate gets choked off, we heard from a great many groups and individuals who are fiercely opposed to your government's decision to invoke closure. I should say, these are people who brought a fresh perspective, who brought information to the committee that we had not heard before. So any suggestion that you've heard it all, that you don't need to hear any more, was completely negated by the evidence from these people this morning.

For example, we heard from Operation Black Vote Canada, which stated in their submission:

"We find the Liberal government's action undemocratic and unconscionable. The Attorney General stacked the first days of hearing with his supporters for Bill 107....

"My community has been completely shut out."

A former MPP from York East, Gary Malkowski, an individual representing the Canadian Hearing Society, who is also deaf himself, was passionate in his pleas for you to cancel the motion. "I cannot believe you are doing this," he repeatedly stated.

Deputy Premier, it's one thing to say that you want to move forward with this legislation, but you're muzzling the public from expressing their views on human rights. You and I both know that the right thing to do is to listen to these individuals who are pleading with us to be heard. Why won't you cancel this motion and let them be heard?

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): To the Attorney General.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): Again we hear from the opposition about concerns about the process that will lead to the reform, but nothing about the reform itself. I've yet to hear a single thing from the member about how Bill 107 may or may not be improved; how in fact we can take a human rights commission, a legal support centre and a human rights tribunal system that might be improved.

I know they have concerns about the process. What about the delay of eight years to reform the human rights system that was visited upon those same people during

the eight years in which that party was in power? What about the delays that are affecting the people who go to the human rights system, in some cases eight years? We heard yesterday from someone who was before the human rights system for some 10 years. My concern about process, Mr. Speaker, is a process being faced by victims of human rights discrimination, and the purpose of this reform is to address those delays in a meaningful way. With this bill, we'll be able to do just that.

Mrs. Elliott: Again to the Deputy Premier: We also heard in committee today from Elizabeth Bruckman, who is a staff lawyer with the Parkdale legal clinic, and her evidence was quite revealing. She advised the committee that when she and a number of other presenters attended the technical briefings on the amendments to Bill 107 that were arranged by the Attorney General's staff last week, they asked a number of questions of the staff about the legal support centre that the Attorney General has promised. Surprisingly, they were advised that it's too soon to know what form the legal support centre will take but certainly that not everyone will be represented by a lawyer—notwithstanding the two statements made by the Attorney General in this Legislature that everyone will be represented by a lawyer.

Deputy Premier, do you have any idea whatsoever how much this centre is going to cost, how it's going to be funded, what form it's going to take or how it's going to operate?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: Well, that person was at a technical briefing, and that is the point. We are sitting down with people, for those who want to sit down with us, and trying to get the information and work with them to put together a human rights system that draws upon their expertise. They want to talk about more process and more process; they want to talk about more committee hearings. We're having more committee hearings. We said that there would be more debate and there is more debate. The question is, at what point do the Legislature and the government say that after 44 years it's time to take a bill, bring it to this Legislature and let the people decide, through their members of provincial Parliament, what the human rights system is going to look like?

We've heard a lot of talk over the years from the NDP, who did nothing about that. We heard no talk about the subject from the Conservatives, who also did nothing about it. Now we've got a bill before the House. It has been here for more than 200 days. We've had committee hearings. We will have more. We'll have more debate and we'll have more amendments. I look forward to getting members' input on this. But we have got to move forward with the human rights reform.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. New question.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is to the Deputy Premier. Yesterday, when you announced the cancellation of hearings on your human rights scheme and quashed debate, you tried to represent that June Callwood, a member of the Order of Canada, was in support of the government. But I have June Callwood's letter from yesterday, where she says:

"I am concerned with some sections of" Bill 107, "and I assumed these would be addressed in scheduled hearings over the next few weeks.

"To my great dismay, these hearings have been cancelled, and the government will not have the benefit of listening to thoughtful analysis of those elements which could in future cause some injustice....

"I beg you, I urge you, to reschedule the hearings."

Deputy Premier, is this the McGuinty government's definition of "justice" and "human rights" in Ontario: "justice denied"?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The honourable member apparently doesn't subscribe to the widely held notion that justice delayed is justice denied. He stands among those who have acknowledged that it is their desire, it is in their interest, to stop the progress and advance of a bill. This is the interest that he takes, but he does not acknowledge that to the people of Ontario. The person beside him, who many days leads that party, has very aptly demonstrated that, and that is in the record of this place. He has put on record that it was his desire that people should turn old. But the reality is that many have, because this issue has been around for a long, long time and has not received the consideration that it needs.

June Callwood has an expectation of some enhancements of the bill. That point of discussion is coming soon through the actions that we've taken. A legislative committee will have the opportunity to consider the perspectives that have been brought forward, to make alterations and to bring back a bill for third reading that has been enhanced as a result of a considerable amount of process.

Mr. Hampton: I don't know whom the Deputy Premier is trying to fool, but this bill has now been time-allocated. There won't be any time to hear these thoughtful suggestions from people who care about human rights. There will be almost no time in committee to deal with these amendments.

Here is the reality: An unsuspecting person in Ontario who picked up Toronto's Globe and Mail today would think that there are going to be hearings. An unsuspecting person who picked up the National Post would think that there are going to be hearings. An unsuspecting person who picked up Metro would think there are going to be hearings. An unsuspecting person who picked up the Toronto Star would think there are going to be hearings. In fact, that is a fraud. There are not going to be any hearings. There's not going to be any more deliberation. There's not going to be any more discussion.

I say again to the McGuinty government, is this your definition of the protection of human rights, the protection of democracy: simply shut it down, deny it and pretend that it might happen some day?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Mr. Bryant: The leader of the third party talks about unsuspecting people. An unsuspecting person tuning in to the legislative channel in 1991, listening to the NDP minister responsible announce that human rights reforms were coming, might have been led to believe that

human rights reforms were coming. An unsuspecting person who heard that the Cornish report had been filed before this Legislature under that government might have thought that reforms were coming. That unsuspecting person would have been fooled into thinking that that government cares a whit about reforming the human rights system—so clinging to the status quo today that they will do everything in their power to derail this bill.

1430

We will not allow that party to derail human rights reforms overdue for too many years. We will have committee hearings continue. We will have clause-by-clause hearings when amendments can be heard, and it will come back to this House—

Interjections.

The Speaker: We can wait. We'll just wait. The member for Timmins-James Bay, I won't warn you again.

New question.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Yesterday in Markham, you announced that the McGuinty government will be expanding programs to further help newcomers in gaining employment. The number of newcomers in York region has steadily increased over the years. In the period 2001 to 2005, 43,000 new immigrants settled in York region; 58% of the new immigrants to the region were of the economic class, which means the majority of them are skilled workers.

Minister, having taken groundbreaking steps to address the issue of registration and licensing for regulated professions through the introduction of Bill 124, the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, I see you have also partnered with the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council to coordinate projects which will help employers connect with skilled newcomers. Could you tell us about this \$1.75-million investment to expand programming to help employers tap into the wealth of talent and skills of newcomers?

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): The member from Thornhill is so right in that there's really been a dramatic paradigm shift in the settlement patterns of immigrants. Now, many immigrants are going directly into York and Peel regions in great numbers, and most of them are very skilled. That's why we've teamed the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council to connect small- and medium-sized business with the highly skilled foreign-trained newcomers.

This \$1.75-million investment would ensure that the small businesses that don't have the time and all the resources to do the background work will now get that support. There will be workshops, there will be human resources available so that small business will win in York region and Peel region, and so will the talented newcomers. It's a win-win situation.

Mr. Racco: Yesterday, when I was in attendance, I saw that Ratna Omidvar, the executive director of TRIEC and the Maytree Foundation, had indicated that this investment will help them provide the tools and resources to help small and medium-sized employers better equip and retain skilled immigrants. Minister, could you tell us who are the partners in this expanded program and how this will be a win-win situation for small business in the 905 and, in particular, the region of York and the region of Peel, where most of those people are going to live?

Hon. Mr. Colle: The critical thing here is that there's a landmark report put forth by York region called Growing Pains. The commitment we've made—and we're delivering on that commitment—is ensuring that as the regions grow and the number of newcomers grows, we also give the service agencies the ability to help those newcomers find employment. So it's a direct investment, along with organizations like COSTI, ACCES, TRIEC, the city of Markham, the Brampton Board of Trade, the Markham Board of Trade. They're providing the job connection, because ultimately these newcomers want a job. So this investment means there are going to be more jobs and more opportunity for newcomers.

As you know, in Markham itself, two newcomers from Hong Kong over a dozen years ago created ATI industries. Those two newcomers now employ 3,200 people in the city of Markham. That's the kind of investment we make in newcomers. When we invest in newcomers, we invest in cities, we invest in Ontario.

NATIVE LAND DISPUTE

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): I have a question for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Minister, you're aware of the McGuinty strategy of saying anything to get elected. After all, you were the first member of the promise-breakers' club by allowing housing on the Oak Ridges moraine. On June 16, you enhanced your legacy. You promised in a news release to compensate Caledonia homeowners and to have detailed recommendations within three days. It has now been 159 days—no recommendations, no money.

I have a letter from a Caledonia homeowner. They sold their house. I quote: "I had no choice but to accept an offer \$25,000 below bank appraisal.... Now I wish to be compensated...." Minister, will this homeowner be compensated, or is this yet another McGuinty broken promise?

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the member very much for the question he has just posed. As he well knows, a number of different ministers and ministry people have been meeting with the committee in Caledonia. I had a meeting with the mayor there some time ago, and with a number of other people as well, to make sure that the program that is going to be put in place will be beneficial to all those individuals who were affected in one way or another by what's happening in Caledonia. We're working on the details of that particular program, and that program will be announced as soon as it's available.

Mr. Barrett: Minister, your news release was last June. This is all about your credibility. I have your news release right here. This message is on your letterhead: "Assistance will go to households directly affected by the blockade."

Minister, you received a letter from my constituent. He lives next door to the occupied site. I quote: "I was both shocked and annoyed when I was told we were not directly affected by the occupation. The value of our property has gone down to ground zero. The buyout of Douglas Creek ... land has directly affected the future property value of our home."

Minister, you didn't answer. You just sent this letter to Minister Ramsay. You've created a false hope by giving a false promise. Have you no self-respect? Why will you not stop passing the buck? Why did you promise compensation if you have no intention of keeping your word?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: As the member well knows, there has been a business recovery plan in place that was looked after by the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, who was immediately on the scene when this happened back in the spring. There has also been a counselling program to assist those individuals who in one way or another felt they were physically or emotionally affected by the goings-on that are still happening or happened in Caledonia. We are working on the plans as well for the recovery program, as we set out in our release of June 16. It will happen.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): My question is for the minister responsible for housing. Today is National Housing Day. National Housing Day was established to raise awareness of the thousands of people living on our streets without housing and without adequate food and health care. There are 122,000 households waiting for housing, most of them within the \$300- to \$400-a-month rate. Minister, can you tell me how many of your so-called affordable housing units actually fall in that \$300- to \$400-a-month rental rate?

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I can tell you this: I had the opportunity yesterday to speak to the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association conference, and the reaction to the various programs that we have announced, that we're funding, and that units are actually being occupied by individuals—this is an organization primarily involved in providing non-profit housing across this province. They seemed to be extremely well pleased by the actions this government has taken so far.

There's always more work that can be done. I can tell you, one of the things we have done is to put pressure on the federal government in every meeting I have had with the minister responsible for CMHC to, number one, make sure that the SCPI funding—the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative, primarily for homelessness—will continue after March 31. It's the first issue I ever raised with her. Secondly, I've asked that the legacy

funding with respect to the social housing out there will be made available so that the existing social housing—

1440

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

Ms. DiNovo: This is why they call it “question period” and never “answer period,” because I didn’t hear an answer to my question.

I’ll restate my question: How many units have you brought forward for 122,000 waiting households in Ontario that they can actually afford, that is, \$300 to \$400? That’s the rate affordable by ODSP earners, OW and minimum wage earners. They’re waiting for your housing. You promised 20,000 units. I’d like to know if there’s even one unit at the \$300- to \$400-a-month rental rate.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: Let’s just take a look at the facts. The facts are that since we’ve come into office, we have added 3,300 rent supplement units to the system for low-income individuals. The fact is that 130 projects are currently being built right across this province that are going to supply housing for 6,500 individuals. The fact is that through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, over 2,200 units are going to be made available for individuals with mental health issues. The fact is that we’ve got a rent bank that has kept 6,600 families and households in their place who would otherwise have been evicted.

We have started the process. We are going to deliver on our housing allowance program. We are going to deliver on the affordable housing units that we set out in our campaign. A lot of work has been done and more work needs to be done. We want to make sure that the vulnerable in this province are adequately housed, and it will happen.

RENEWABLE FUELS

Mr. David Oraziatti (Sault Ste. Marie): My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, today you announced the opening of the Prince wind farm near Sault Ste. Marie, with an investment worth almost \$400 million, demonstrating the co-operation our government achieved with Brookfield Power. Energy projects such as this and the recently announced \$135-million cogeneration facility at Algoma Steel allow companies to benefit from their investments through our clean and renewable energy strategy.

Here’s what Harry Goldgut, CEO of Brookfield Power, had to say: “The completion of the Prince wind farm represents a major achievement for Brookfield Power.... In a little over a year, we have constructed Canada’s largest wind farm. It’s a tribute to the members of the local community, our employees and construction partners and ... in particular, the Ontario government.

I know that our government is committed to bringing more renewable energy online because it not only helps boost our generation capacity in the province but also has positive environmental impacts through a reduction in greenhouse gases.

Minister, with today’s announcement, where does Ontario stand when it comes to the amount of wind generation produced in Canada?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): I want to thank the member for Sault Ste. Marie, especially for sharing the quote of Harry Goldgut, the CEO of Brookfield Power, with respect to the Prince wind farm. Let me say to the member from Sault Ste. Marie, thank you for your commitment to making this happen. I wish the Leader of the Opposition was so strong in his advocacy in his riding for wind power.

Something happened yesterday at about 3:15 in the afternoon: Ontario went from being last in Canada in wind energy to being first when that power was hooked on to the grid at about 3:15 in the afternoon. Last to first in three years: When we took office we had 15 megawatts of wind and today we have 482; by this time next year, it will be over 1,300 megawatts. That’s how you reduce emissions associated with coal. That’s how you move this province forward on an environmental and health perspective.

Mr. Oraziatti: On behalf of my community, I want to thank the minister for his leadership in addressing our energy challenges. He’s doing an outstanding job, in stark contrast to the previous Tory government, which brought no new generation online. In fact, between 1995 and 2003 our installed generation capacity fell by about 6%. At the same time, electrical demand increased by about 8.5%. The NDP built no new electrical supply in Ontario, ended all conservation initiatives that would have saved Ontarians 5,200 megawatts by 2000, paid \$150 million to cancel the Manitoba power agreement, and drove hydro rates, as the member from the third party likes to say, through the roof by 40%. Despite the past government’s abysmal record and our continued efforts to be bring more renewable power online, the leader of the third party tries to pass off our announcements, like the one today, as “very modest” and a “public relations exercise.”

Minister, can you clarify for the House what projects like today’s announcement mean for Ontario’s economy?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: First of all, Mr. Speaker, a good chunk of this wind farm is in your riding. You too, I know, have for many years worked on these types of projects.

We’ve launched two renewable RFPs that resulted in 18 successful projects. Others would like to have you believe that they’re not being built, but I can tell you that they’re up and running, and the rest that aren’t are coming on stream. Why? Because we think it’s important to clean up the air, unlike the New Democrats, who closed all opportunities.

They did nothing on renewables. When they’re up north they want to keep the coal plants open, and when they’re down south they want to close the coal plants. I am trying to find parliamentary language which will reconcile the inconsistency in that position but, unfortunately, like so much the leader of the third party says, it’s irreconcilable with fact.

The fact is that one government in this country has moved forward on renewables like no other. It's the McGuinty government, in the interest of our environment and in the interest of public health.

COAL-FIRED GENERATING STATIONS

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): My question is for the Minister of Energy. You made a solemn promise to the standing committee on estimates on September 26 to reveal the names of those so-called energy experts, and so far you have failed to honour that promise. Yet you proudly, through your deflecto agency, the OPA, want to tell everybody about the consultants you've hired at \$1,500 a day to advise you with regard to the energy policy and the integrated power system plan going forward.

Minister, if you're so quick to put out the names of these agencies that you're paying \$1,500 a day to sit and advise—and it's quite an eclectic group, I might add—then why are you not willing, as you undertook to the standing committee, to name the names of the energy experts that advised you on your failed, ridiculous, impossible, undoable, “Say anything, do anything to get a vote” coal plan?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. We can wait. Government House leader. Order.

The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): We think it's important to fund participation in public consultation around our power system plan. I think it's important to provide funding to environmental groups to have a say in these matters, I do, and I think it's worth the money. I think it's worth the money to fund groups that have come out opposed to some of the decisions the government has made. Why? Because we believe—by the way, intervener funding was something your government established in principle, and you should be proud of that. We think it's important to hear from these people.

Some of them have publicly opposed the government's plan, and we want to hear from them. These are very technical, complicated issues. The government, through the OPA, the rate base, spends a lot of money to develop plans. We think, to give other groups in the community the opportunity to respond in an informed, meaningful fashion, they should be funded even though in many cases they don't agree with the government's policy.

Mr. Yakabuski: He's not the Acting Premier but he certainly fancies himself a premier actor. Again no attempt to provide this Legislature with the information we've asked for.

Minister, what you are doing here, spending \$1,500 a day with this eclectic group of consultants that the taxpayer is picking up the bill for through the rate base, is building another premierial shield around Dalton McGuinty so that when you guys screw it up again, like you screwed it up with the coal plan, you're going to

have somebody to blame, but this time you're going to give us the names.

1450

Minister, I'm asking you again—a solemn promise to a standing committee on estimates—to provide the names of those who led you to make the decision to make a promise that was undoable. Give us the names, or just prove that you'll say anything, you'll do anything, to get a vote. And you know what I'm telling the people of Ontario? You're going to do it again.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: I think it's important to hear from environmentalists. I think it's important to hear from local distribution companies. I think it's important to hear from engineering experts. And, by the way, these groups, I can assure you, don't necessarily support what the government is doing. In fact, I think it's a principle on something that's this important that we give them the opportunity to come to not only the OPA but eventually the Ontario Energy Board with expert advice, commentary, some of which won't be coincident with what the government's policy is.

I would remind the member opposite that your government hired some consultants on the energy file. I remember the American dream team on nuclear power. I say \$1,500 for an environmental group is a lot better than \$40 million for a team of Americans who not only didn't fix the nuclear situation, but arguably made it worse, because none of them, it turns out—

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

New question?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order, order. The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

NATIVE LAND DISPUTE

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Mines. The failure of the McGuinty government to properly consult Ontario First Nation communities, as required by Supreme Court of Canada decisions, forced Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation to go to court to defend themselves against a \$10-billion lawsuit launched by a mining company, Platinex. Now, as part of a court-ordered resolution, the people of Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug are developing a consultation protocol in conjunction with Platinex and the Ontario Ministry of Mines. But, what a surprise: You, as Minister of Mines for Ontario, refuse to sign the consultation protocol.

My question, Minister: Since Ontario is a signatory to Treaty 9, which covers Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug's traditional lands, will you, the Minister of Mines, commit to personally signing the consultation protocol in keeping with the nation-to-nation spirit that Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug deserves?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): The leader of the third party knows very well that there is ongoing litigation regarding this matter and, as part of that litigation, the court re-

quired a consultation process, which is still ongoing. As this is a litigation matter, I would rather not comment on it, because I think it would be inappropriate.

However, I believe that these discussions should be at the negotiation table, where they belong and where they are. However, it is important to recognize that the protocol is still being negotiated in good faith by all parties and that it's not yet complete. My ministry staff have already indicated that they would be prepared to sign the completed protocol. Once the protocol is complete it is more appropriate for my ministry staff to sign what would be a technical process agreement, and that's what we're talking about.

Mr. Hampton: Imagine this: The people of Kitchen-humaykoosib Inninuwig go to the table in good faith, they negotiate a protocol, and then they find that the Minister of Mines for the McGuinty government won't sign it.

Look, Minister, 18 months ago, with much fanfare and self-congratulation, the McGuinty government announced "a new approach to aboriginal affairs." You said, "Our new approach calls for working with aboriginal people." What did you do after that? You failed to consult with this First Nation community. What happened? The court said you were in breach of the Constitution and in breach of legal rights of First Nations. Now they come to the table, they want to negotiate an agreement and you won't sign.

I ask this question: Will you commit today to a consultation agreement that doesn't attempt to cap funding at wholly inadequate levels but fully funds the First Nation's need for legal expertise—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you, Minister.

Hon. Mr. Bartolucci: The leader of the third party knows full well that Judge Smith's decision was that all three parties should work actively to try to come up with some resolution. From that ruling to today—

Mr. Hampton: You're holding it up.

Hon. Mr. Bartolucci: The leader of the third party is giving inaccurate information when he says that we're holding it up. That's inaccurate; that is not fact. We have been at the table from the very beginning; we remain at the table. We are very anxious to enter into that protocol agreement. There has been ongoing dialogue. For the leader of the third party to indicate otherwise is completely inaccurate, as it is not fact based on anything. He should know better.

PETITIONS

WATER QUALITY

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock):
"Amend the Clean Water Act

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas every Ontarian wants the best water quality possible; and

"Whereas the goal of clean water can be achieved effectively through amendments to existing legislation; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals are determined to hammer through the flawed legislation known as the Clean Water Act; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals have failed to effectively address the numerous problems in the bill; and

"Whereas rural Ontario stands to suffer significantly under this poorly thought out policy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To not pass Bill 43 (the Clean Water Act) until proper funding and amendments are in place."

This is brought to me by many individuals from my constituency.

FAIR ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have a petition today:

"In Support of Skilled Immigrants—Bill 124

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government is committed to establishing measures that will break down barriers for Ontario newcomers; and

"Whereas these measures will ensure that the 34 regulatory professions in Ontario have admissions and application practices that are fair, clear and open; and

"Whereas these measures will include the establishment of a fairness commissioner and an access centre for internationally trained individuals; and

"Whereas, through providing a fair and equitable system, newcomers will be able to apply their global experience, which will not only be beneficial to their long-term career goals but also to the Ontario economy as a whole;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"That all members of the House support the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006, Bill 124, and work to ensure its prompt passage in the Ontario Legislature."

I agree with this petition and will affix my signature to it, and give it to page Ian.

LAND TITLES

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham, which reads as follows:

"Whereas in the current environment of an escalating problem of title theft and mortgage fraud property protections for homeowners are warranted and real measures are necessary to address real estate fraud; and

"Whereas MPP Joe Tascona's Restore the Deed Act, Bill 136, has passed second reading in the Legislature and has been referred to the standing committee on general government; and

"Whereas among others, the Restore the Deed Act has four primary benefits:

"Reduce the harm by ensuring that the person who is the rightful owner of the property keeps the property. The innocent buyer or the innocent lender must seek compensation from the land titles assurance fund, as is New Brunswick law.

"Prevent the fraud by restricting access to registration of documents to licensed real estate professionals who carry liability insurance, by requiring notification statements and the freezing of the registration, as is Saskatchewan law, and by establishing a system of 'no dealings' where landowners can mark their title, which can only be removed by them using a personal identification number prior to the property being transferred or mortgaged;

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"Access to the land titles assurance fund be reformed as a 'fund of first resort' and be operated by an arm's-length board of directors appointed by the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, composed a broad representation of consumer, real estate industry and law enforcement groups.

"Victims of fraud prior to the enactment of the Restore the Deed Act will be eligible to apply for compensation under the reformed land titles assurance fund; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government's proposed legislation will not get the job done;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to enact the measures to protect homeowners from having their homes stolen as contained in MPP Joe Tascona's Restore the Deed Act."

I'm pleased to sign this very long petition and present it to the Legislature.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas children with autism who have reached the age of six years are no longer being discharged from their preschool autism program; and

"Whereas these children should be getting the best special education possible in the form of applied behaviour analysis (ABA) within the school system; and

"Whereas there are approximately 700 preschool children with autism across Ontario who are required to wait indefinitely for placement in the program, and there are also countless school-age children that are not receiving the support they require in the school system; and

"Whereas this situation has an impact on the families, extended families and friends of all of these children; and

"Whereas, as stated on the website for the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, 'IBI can make a significant difference in the life of a child with autism. Its objective

is to decrease the frequency of challenging behaviours, build social skills and promote language development';

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to fund the treatment of IBI for all pre-school children awaiting services. We also petition the Legislature of Ontario to fund an educational program in the form of ABA in the school system."

I agree with these petitioners and have affixed my signature to this.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. Bruce Crozier (Essex): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly regarding cross-border travel:

"Whereas the United States government, through the western hemisphere travel initiative, is proposing that US citizens will require a passport or single-purpose travel card to cross the Canada-US border; and

"Whereas a passport or single-purpose travel card would be an added expense, and the inconvenience of having to apply for and carry a new document would be a barrier for many Canadian and US cross-border travellers; and

"Whereas the George Bush government proposal could mean a loss of as many as 3.5 million US visitors to Ontario, and place in peril as many as 7,000 jobs in the Ontario tourism industry by 2008, many of which are valuable entry jobs for youth and new Canadians; and

"Whereas many of the US states bordering Canada have expressed similar concerns regarding the punitive economic impact of this plan, and both states and provinces along the US-Canada border recognize that the importance of the safe and efficient movement of people across that border is vital to the economies of both countries;

"Be it therefore resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario support the establishment of a bi-national group to establish an alternative to the proposed US border requirements, and inform Prime Minister Harper that his decision not to advocate on behalf of Ontarians is ill-advised and contrary to the responsibilities of the elected representatives in Canada."

In support, I put my signature to this petition.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the parents of St. Paul's elementary school in Alliston have raised many issues regarding the security, cleanliness and state of repair of their school; and

"Whereas a 2003 condition assessment completed by the Ontario government identified the need for \$1.8 million in repairs to St. Paul's elementary school; and

"Whereas the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board has approached the Ministry of Education

with the intention of having the school deemed prohibitive to repair as they believe the school requires \$2.28 million in repairs, or 84% of the school replacement cost; and

"Whereas there are ongoing concerns with air quality, heating and ventilation, electrical, plumbing, lack of air conditioning and the overall structure of the building, including cracks from floor to ceiling, to name a few;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Education immediately deem St. Paul's elementary school prohibitive to repair, secure immediate funding and begin construction of a new facility so that the children of St. Paul's can be educated in a facility that is secure and offers them the respect and dignity that they deserve."

My mother taught at this school for 33 years, and I went to this school from kindergarten to grade 8. I certainly agree with the petition, and I want to give it to page Mariam to bring to the table.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It's been sent to me by the Service Employees International Union. It reads as follows:

"Whereas, in June 2003, Dalton McGuinty said Ontario Liberals are committed to ensuring that nursing home residents receive more personal care each day and will reinstate minimum standards, and inspectors will be required to audit the staff-to-resident ratios; and

"Whereas Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman, in October 2004, said that the Ontario government will not set a specified number of care hours nursing home residents are to receive each day; and

"Whereas Ontario nursing home residents still receive the lowest number of care hours in the Western world; and

"Whereas studies have indicated nursing home residents should receive at least 4.1 hours of nursing care per day; and

"Whereas a coroner's jury in April 2005 recommended the Ontario government establish a minimum number of care hours nursing home residents must receive each day;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario immediately enact a minimum standard of 3.5 hours of nursing care for each nursing home resident per day."

I agree with the petitioners. I have affixed my signature to this.

GRAVESITES OF FORMER PREMIERS

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I have a petition here from some individuals

from the Windsor Community Museum, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Premiers of Ontario have made enormous contributions over the years in shaping the Ontario of today; and

"Whereas, as a result, the final resting places of the 18 deceased Premiers are among the most historically significant sites in the province, but have yet to be officially recognized; and

"Whereas, were these gravesites to be properly maintained and marked with an historical plaque and a flag of Ontario, these locations would be a source of pride to the communities where these former Premiers lie buried, and provide potential points of interest for visitors;

"Now therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislature Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 25, an Act that will preserve the gravesites of the former Premiers of Ontario."

As I agree with this petition, I affix my signature and send it to the Clerk's table.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario"—and again, it's a petition from Dr. Tim Hillson's office in Orillia, an ophthalmologist in the city.

"Whereas age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is the leading cause of blindness in the elderly and is present in some form in 25% to 33% of seniors over the age of 75. AMD has two forms: the more common 'dry' type and the 'wet' type. Although the wet type occurs in only 15% of AMD patients, these patients account for 90% of the legal blindness that occurs with AMD. The wet type is further subdivided into classic and occult subtypes, based on the appearance of the AMD on special testing. Photodynamic therapy, a treatment where abnormal blood vessels are closed with a laser-activated chemical, has been shown to slow the progression of vision loss in both subtypes of wet AMD;

"Whereas OHIP has not extended coverage for photodynamic therapy to the occult subtype of wet AMD, despite there being substantial clinical evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of this treatment in patients with either form of wet AMD. Untreated, these patients can expect a progression in their visual loss, with central blindness as the end result;

"Whereas affected patients are in a position where a proven treatment is available to help preserve their vision, but this treatment can only be accessed at their own personal expense. Treatment costs are between \$12,500 and \$18,000 over an 18-month period. Many patients resign themselves to a continued worsening of their vision, as for them the treatment is financially unattainable. The resultant blindness in these patients manifests itself as costs to society in other forms, such as an increased need for home care, missed time from work for family members providing care, and an increased rate

of injuries such as hip fractures that can be directly attributable to their poor vision.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to fund the treatment of the occult subtype of macular degeneration with photodynamic therapy for all patients awaiting this service."

I am pleased to sign my name to this and give it to Andrew to present to the table.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): I have a petition here signed by residents of the extended care units in Timmins and Kapuskasing, and also by a number of families, including the residents councils and the family councils organized by Tesca Alberton and others. It reads as follows:

"Help Put Care into a Careless Act

"The government has not listened to the voices of residents, families, staff, volunteers and others in drafting the proposed new Long-Term Care Homes Act. We all know what the residents need is more care. The government obviously believes that instead, home needs must rule. In fact, if this act is passed, government will have more power and less responsibility and commitment to residents' care than they do now. They will leave homes with more paperwork, less time for residents. Homes will feel more like institutions than home;

"Therefore we, the undersigned residents, families and staff and volunteers and supporters of Extendicare Timmins, need you to ask the government to make this act about what residents need most, that is care, and to commit to providing the resources required to implement the act."

I sign that petition.

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FAIR ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS

Ms. Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): This is a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly regarding access to trades and professions in Ontario:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

"Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent, arbitrary and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

"Whereas action by Ontario's trades and professions could remove many such barriers, but Ontario's trades and professions have failed to recognize that such structural barriers exist, much less to take action to remove them, and to provide fair, timely, transparent and

cost-effective access to trades and professions for new Canadians trained outside Canada;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario Legislative Assembly urge the members of all parties to swiftly pass Bill 124, the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006, and to require Ontario's regulated professions and trades to review and modify their procedures and qualification requirements to swiftly meet the needs of Ontario's employers, Ontario's newcomers and their own membership, all of whom desperately need the very skills new Canadians bring working for their organizations, for their trades and professions, and for their families."

I certainly agree with this and I will attach my signature to it and hand it to page Colby.

OPPOSITION DAY

MANUFACTURING AND FOREST INDUSTRY JOBS

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario recognize that manufacturing and resource jobs have formed the economic foundation of prosperity and economic security for Ontario's working families for more than a century;

That failed provincial policies are causing that foundation to crumble;

That those failed policies have led to a recession in Ontario's manufacturing and forestry sectors and caused great hardship for Ontario's working families;

That decisive action must be taken now to keep good-paying manufacturing and forestry jobs in Ontario; and

That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario call upon the Ontario government to take immediate action to sustain jobs by providing greater institutional support to manufacturing and resource workers whose workplaces are threatened, starting with a reasonable hydro policy that can sustain jobs and the creation of a job protection commissioner for Ontario—as recommended by the NDP job protection act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bob Delaney): I recognize the member for Kenora–Rainy River.

Mr. Hampton: I wish at this time to announce I'll be sharing my time with the member for Timmins–James Bay and the member for Hamilton East.

For more than a century, manufacturing and resource jobs have formed the foundation of prosperity and economic security for Ontario's working families. Now, due to changing economic conditions and failed provincial policies, that foundation is threatening to crumble. The numerous auto parts closure announcements, including the loss of 600 jobs due to the closure of the Ford engine plant in Windsor, along with the seemingly endless sawmill and pulp and paper mill closures in northern Ontario, are really just a symptom of a much larger

problem. Ontario needs a completely new economic policy tool box to sustain and grow the kind of good-paying jobs that are at the heart of Ontario's economy.

A Statistics Canada labour force survey shows a loss of 136,000 manufacturing jobs, more than 13% of the total in the past two years under the McGuinty government. The trend is clear and alarming, threatening to cost Ontario as much as 100,000 more jobs in the coming years unless decisive action is taken.

Ontario's traditional manufacturing strength was based on a policy framework of stable, reasonable-cost electricity, a high-quality workforce, pro-industry trade measures, a competitively priced Canadian dollar and something we've come to know as the medicare advantage. The quality workforce is still here, but Ontario's workers are increasingly left stranded by flawed free trade initiatives—the latest one being the softwood lumber agreement, which the McGuinty government endorsed wholeheartedly—soaring hydroelectricity costs, a loonie that is skyrocketing in value and a McGuinty government that is giving away the medicare advantage. Together, these forces are delivering a knockout blow that is leaving Ontario manufacturing and resource-based jobs and workers and communities reeling.

The McGuinty government's response has been slow and feeble at best. While about a year ago the government launched something called the advanced manufacturing investment strategy, offering loans of up to 10% of eligible costs for introducing "leading technologies," whatever payoff will come from this patchwork program will be years down the road. Meanwhile, tens of thousands of layoffs have been implemented, with the program not even coming close to stopping the bleeding.

The McGuinty government's hydroelectricity policy has been even more disappointing. The deregulated Harris-Eves spot market has been maintained by the McGuinty government, despite their promise that this was dead, despite their promise that they believed in a public power system. The result of the McGuinty government continuing on with the Harris-Eves spot electricity market has been hydro rates for industrial users that have skyrocketed, and this is never more evident than in northern Ontario.

Across northern Ontario you can find a surplus of electricity. Northern Ontario actually has more electricity than it can use. Not only that, but because most of the electricity is generated from falling water, it is among the lowest-cost electricity, not just in Ontario, not just in Canada, not just in the United States, but among the lowest-cost electricity in the world. Electricity is generated in northern Ontario for costs under two cents a kilowatt hour, but it's McGuinty government policy to force the paper mills and pulp mills, which in many cases are located right beside the hydro dam, to pay six and seven cents a kilowatt hour for electricity that is generated right there beside the mill at only two cents a kilowatt hour. Meanwhile, these mills have to compete with mills from Quebec, Manitoba, British Columbia, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan, where hydro rates are much more reasonable.

The McGuinty government wonders why 45,000 direct and indirect jobs have been destroyed in the northern Ontario forest sector economy. I can tell you, and literally dozens of mill managers will tell you, their corporations will not invest in Ontario as long as the McGuinty government continues that strategy of driving hydro rates through the roof.

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I want to address some other issues. Primarily, I want to address how the McGuinty government is giving away the medicare advantage. What does the medicare advantage mean in terms of manufacturing? Well, all you need to do is look at areas like steel or auto, where the same company may have a plant in the United States and a plant in Ontario. In the United States, they have to purchase private health insurance for their workers. In Ontario, they pay the employer health tax. The difference between private health insurance in the United States and the employer health tax in Ontario literally works out to thousands of dollars a year per worker. In some cases, the cost saving in Ontario is \$3,000 or \$4,000 dollars a year. When Ford, General Motors, Chrysler and many of the steel companies in the United States talk about reducing their costs in the workplace, what do they go after? They go after the private health insurance. That's what is happening at Ford, General Motors and Chrysler. That's what happened at US Steel. They tried to shed responsibility for purchasing private health insurance for their workers. So that's been a huge benefit to Ontario workers in terms of locating jobs in Ontario.

But what do we see of the McGuinty government? We see, piece by piece, day by day, the McGuinty government giving away the medicare advantage. Under the McGuinty government, despite all their promises, we see more profit-driven, private delivery of home care. We see more profit-driven, private delivery of long-term care. We see, in early ads in the newspaper from clinics and operations, Americans setting up here in Toronto, offering profit-driven private health care.

Where's the McGuinty government? Allowing it to happen. In fact, the McGuinty government only three years ago said that any move toward profit-driven, private-finance hospitals would be a big mistake. It would add to the cost of hospitals and drive up the cost of medicare. The McGuinty government said that a move toward profit-driven private financing of hospitals would be a bad idea. Now we see the McGuinty government promoting not the two profit-driven, private-finance hospitals that were supported by the Conservatives but actually promoting almost 30 of these hospitals.

What does that mean for the cost of medicare? The Brampton hospital illustrates it in colour. The Brampton hospital was supposed to cost \$500 million as a publicly financed hospital. As soon as you bring in profit-driven private financing, the cost of the hospital goes up by \$150 million. If you just do some simple math: 30 hospital projects, all profit-driven private finance, and let's just assume that the added cost for each one of them isn't \$150 million but only \$100 million for that private

financing and the profits which have to come out it. Over a 20-year period, which is what these bonds are typically financed for, you're talking about an additional \$3 billion being added to the cost of the health care system.

Do you get better health care as a result of it? No. Do you get more health care as a result of it? No. What you get is profit-driven private finance, profit-driven more private delivery and a health care system that is becoming more and more costly. That is the destruction of the medicare advantage. I leave time here for my colleagues to speak about other individual aspects of this.

The McGuinty government so far has ignored to a large extent the manufacturing and forest sector job crisis in this province. I'm happy that there are some workers here today who know at first hand about how bad this is. They know what's happening in their workplaces. I just say to the McGuinty government that you need to have a hydro rate policy that doesn't destroy forest sector jobs, that doesn't destroy manufacturing sector jobs. You need to have a health care policy that doesn't destroy forest sector jobs, that doesn't destroy manufacturing sector jobs. You need to have a health care policy that doesn't drive up the cost of health care by going towards more and more expensive, profit-driven private delivery. And you would need to look at strategies like a jobs commissioner.

British Columbia was losing a lot of jobs in the early 1990s. It was actually a Social Credit government that established the office of a jobs commissioner. The jobs commissioner had the tools and the responsibility and the resources, when a company was in trouble and in danger of laying off a lot of workers or in danger of closing the doors, to go into a community, to look at, "Are there things we can do in terms of hydro rates? Are there things we can do in terms of getting you better financing? Are there things we can do in terms of sitting down with the union and workers and working out a new collective agreement? Are there things we can do in terms of government policy that will give you an advantage?" Is any of that happening in Ontario today? No.

The McGuinty government stands on the sidelines while literally some of the best jobs—jobs that are at the core of our community—are wiped out. And about all you get from the McGuinty government is a comment like, "Oh, I feel your pain. I really feel your pain." But working people in Ontario don't need a Premier who says, "I feel your pain." Working people in Ontario need a Premier and a government who are prepared to take action: prepared to take action to sustain the medicare advantage, prepared to take action to ensure that we have stable and reasonable hydro rates, and a government that's prepared to take action and implement a jobs commissioner position so there is actually somebody in government who is focused on these issues, paying attention to these issues and taking up these issues on a day-by-day community basis.

This issue, these problems, can no longer be ignored. It is affecting far too many workers, far too many communities in this province. If the McGuinty government

doesn't start to take action on this front, we're going to see the loss of thousands more good-paying jobs go that are at the heart of our community.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): I rise today to make comments on the motion that's been put forward by the third party. I really must say that it takes some nerve to criticize the commitment this government has made towards creating employment and furthering economic development. I would argue that the third party has no right to criticize any government after the severe damage they did to the economic stability of this province in the early 1990s. I would also argue that this government has done everything within its power to stimulate job creation and business investment in the province, and it has made Ontario's economy more stable for both the immediate and distant futures.

Let me start off by talking about some of the many accomplishments that the McGuinty government has rendered in the economic sector after taking office. While it is true that a strong dollar and higher-than-expected energy costs have caused some sectors in the province to face ongoing challenges, we have been consistent in helping those industries deal with the challenges in an attempt to find viable long-term solutions. It should be clear to everyone in this House that our government has a plan, and it's a plan that is rendering positive results in Ontario's economy.

We have remained prudent in our fiscal planning since taking office, and the result has been the creation of more than 250,000 net jobs in the province since October 2003. On top of that number—almost astonishing—is that nine out of every 10 of those jobs have been a full-time, high-paying variety. We've also consistently reduced the annual unemployment rate during our term to a new four-year low of 6.6% last year.

In addition to the aforementioned jobs that have been created in our mandate already, nearly half a million jobs will be created in the province by the year 2012, thanks to several of the initiatives that we have brought in since taking office. This includes a \$1.2-billion Move Ontario plan for roads and bridges and \$30 billion for ReNew Ontario infrastructure investments, as well as the many initiatives surrounding energy programs. This is in addition to the \$6.2-billion investment to improve post-secondary education and training and a \$2.1-billion investment in a job skills renewal strategy. These are just a few of the many initiatives that the McGuinty government has put forward to help stimulate employment growth and the overall health of Ontario's economy in the three years since taking office.

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While our government programs have helped to stimulate the economy, we are also helping with industry-specific programs to assist in hard times. One of the industries that is vital to the prosperity of Ontario's economy is the manufacturing sector. There have been many issues concerning the Ontario manufacturing sector, but let's not forget that there are hard times everywhere throughout the world in this industry. Ontario has

been very proactive in trying to assess and eliminate those problems. The United States lost 11% of their manufacturing jobs last year; that's in addition to a loss of 16% in Japan, 20% in Brazil and 15% in China.

So what has the McGuinty government done to combat these losses in Ontario? We have created the advanced manufacturing investment strategy, which will help with \$500 million in loans to assist and ensure that Ontario's manufacturing sector stays competitive. We've also helped it by attracting \$7 billion in overall investments to the province and with a \$1.4-billion labour market agreement as well. We've also helped the sector cope with rising power concerns by an energy rate cap for large industrial in the manufacturing industry.

Let it be shown that we have also helped with fiscal support to others in need within the province. This includes committing over \$1 billion in support to the Ontario forestry sector, which has helped it to become more competitive and to secure jobs that are essential to maintaining a very strong northern economy in the province. We've also committed \$140 million to help northern Ontario's pulp and paper sector to achieve greater energy efficiency and sustainability by way of a rebate program that will allow companies to transition to competitive and sustainable performance.

I'd also like to take a minute to cite some very specific examples of economic investment in the riding of Huron-Bruce, which I represent. Through the Ontario Power Authority, we have signed a long-term energy contract with Bruce Power—which is located in my riding—a \$4.25-billion investment that has created 1,500 new, high-paying jobs. I can tell you that this has been received—it is a tremendous success. The riding is rejuvenating itself. We have gone through some very difficult times and we are revitalizing our communities in the surrounding area.

One of the things that my riding was so enthusiastic about—we have had steady unemployment, steady loss of jobs from our rural communities. For the first time in—I'll tell you, it's probably 15 years—we received a grant from the Ministry of Health, a growth initiative for our hospital in Kincardine. I can't tell you the difference that makes in our community. So when I hear the leader of the third party stand up and talk about what has happened and what continues to happen from the McGuinty government, in the riding of Huron Bruce—I've spoken to the initiatives that we have done; I'm speaking to specifics now—I have never seen such excitement: our new ethanol plant in Hensall, my agricultural community. We have seen hard times, and \$910 million has been re-invested back into the agricultural sector for income stabilization.

We know that we do have challenges; we recognize that. But what can we do as a government? The McGuinty government has come repeatedly to the table, but where do we see our opportunities? When I see the excitement in my riding and the rebirth that's happening in my riding, I say to the members in the House today, it is a day for Huron-Bruce that we thank the McGuinty

government for the good work that has happened. We know that those challenges have not gone away and we know that we'll have many more to overcome, but we know that we will do it with the aid of the McGuinty government.

When I talk about the progress that the McGuinty government—let's talk about the third party.

Interjection.

Mrs. Mitchell: I didn't interrupt them, Mr. Speaker, so I would hope that they show me the same courtesy, but I know it's difficult for them.

I know that your energy policy—this is one of the things that has been talked about. What would my riding look like, for instance, if their position on energy came forward? I can tell you what my riding would look like. It was just a few short years ago that we bused people in to get them interested in moving to our communities. That's what the energy policy you propose would do to my riding of Huron-Bruce.

Let's look back at the third party's spotted record. During the period from 1990 to 1995, Ontario lost 10% of its good-paying jobs in the industrial sector. In addition to that, more than 100,000 vital manufacturing jobs disappeared during the same period, during the reign of the NDP. This contributed to a total net job loss of 74,700, compared to the 250 net gain during the NDP's term in government. That equates to a total of 1,300 jobs lost a month.

Let me also remind the members in the House that the NDP government was responsible for carrying four consecutive budget deficits in excess of \$10 billion annually. This strategy by the NDP caused Ontario's debt to triple. Those are just some of the numbers one needs to take into consideration.

While the NDP government was in power, 14 mills were closed down in the province, costing Ontarians in excess of 700 jobs. They were also in office when the number of Ontarians working in the forestry, mining, and oil and gas sectors was reduced by 6,000 people. They were also the party that drastically cut agricultural spending and direct income stabilization for support for my agricultural community—an astounding 20% reduction. They increased spending in the other areas by 20% while my agricultural community took a whack of 20%. These are indeed astonishing numbers, and they're made that much more incredible by the fact that the third party often calls themselves the party of the worker.

As a small business owner in a rural community during the governing years of the NDP, I can tell you that I still remember the lack of stability in our economy, and I remember what our communities were sustaining at that time.

The McGuinty government has learned from the mistakes others have been made in the past. We are continuing to be diligent in our quest to maintain a viable and stable economy that businesses want to invest in and where people can maintain good-paying jobs. While there is no doubt that more work needs to be done—and I do want to acknowledge that more work needs to be

done—I think that we have been able to make many strides in accomplishing these goals that will continue to make Ontario very exciting and the proud province of Ontario our first choice of where to live.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): As you might imagine, I don't necessarily agree with the member from Huron-Bruce, who just spoke.

Mrs. Mitchell: No. I didn't see that coming.

Mr. Chudleigh: I know you find that surprising. I'm going to start by quoting the member from Mississauga West, who was making a statement today. They talked about 200,000 new jobs created in Ontario in their first three years of being in government. That rate is the lowest job-creation rate as a percentage in Canada, and this government was coming off the boom years of over a million new jobs created during the term of the Progressive Conservative government. In 1995, when we took office, our first three years created 363,400 new jobs—and we were coming off the recession years of the NDP. That's 110,000 more jobs than the Liberals created in their first three years. We're 110,000 jobs ahead of where the Liberals were; 250,000 new jobs is a dismal record.

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Today in Ontario, we have low inflation. The CPI just came out today, and we're about 0.6%. We have low interest rates. By historical standards, a 6% prime rate for the bank is a low rate. Our growth rate is projected at 1.5%, a full percentage point under where the rest of Canada or where the United States might be, and that is a dismal record. It's what you get when you put half-efforts into things. It's like the half-truths that this government is becoming known for.

Yesterday, the Attorney General quoted the member from Whitby-Ajax as wanting to suspend hearings on Bill 107. Later, the member for Whitby-Ajax explained the rest of the story. She explained that we wanted to suspend the hearings until the amendments were tabled so the committee could deal with the reality of what the bill was about, as opposed to the hypothetical nature that they were debating. The rest of the story: Following this, a member of the Legislature suggested that watching this government operate was like watching a Laurel and Hardy movie. I remember the old quote from Laurel that the AG—"This is another fine mess you've got us into, Ollie." This is the same Attorney General who, in the summer of 2005, which was known as the year of the gun in Toronto, with the highest shooting incidence in Toronto's history, was taking bows for his recent pit bull legislation—a dismal record.

The Premier was quoted not long ago as saying that over 1,000 jobs were lost at GM in Oshawa and calling this a "small contraction." What a dismal record for a Premier. The member for Markham at the time, talking about municipalities which were reeling from plant closures all across this province and asking the government to do something, asking for meetings with the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, which the minister wasn't willing to give them—but they were asking for

them—the member for Markham referred to these municipalities as "crybabies." What a dismal record for a government to have.

The member for Guelph-Wellington, when announcing that 550 jobs were lost at Imperial Tobacco, wasn't referring to the jobs lost; she talked about how their plan was working. What a dismal record for a government to have. Some 115,000 manufacturing jobs gone in Ontario—what a dismal record.

Other sector job growth is some of the lowest in Canada—a dismal record for any government. Growth rates—a dismal record. Innuendo, half-stories and half-truths—a dismal record. Lost jobs, "small contractions," "crybabies" and "our plan is working"—a dismal record.

On October 4 of next year, Ontarians will judge you on your dismal record.

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto-Danforth): I am very pleased to speak in favour of the motion put forward by the leader of the NDP, Howard Hampton. When you actually look at the way the Liberal Party has approached the economy of this province, you can only conclude that they have decided to demolish the foundations of this economy. They have decided to demolish the foundations of manufacturing in this province. They've decided that really ensuring that there is a framework for people to work in is not of concern to Dalton McGuinty or the party that follows him.

If you look back at Ontario's history, if you look back to the beginning of the 20th century, there was a guy—not an NDPer; a Tory—Sir Adam Beck, who put forward the idea for Ontario Hydro. At the time, electricity was generated in small coal plants all over southern Ontario—very expensive power, privately owned. The price that was charged was the price the market would bear. After what was called the great coal famine of 1905, when a massive strike in the United States stopped the flow of coal to Ontario, Beck said, "We in Ontario have to have an energy base for manufacturing that will allow us to develop the industrial base that this province needs." He brought forward Ontario Hydro, and the Liberals fought him every step of the way. But he was right.

As the century wore on, it was clear that our party understood the essential need for a stable, publicly owned power generation utility that would set the base for industrial manufacturing and industrial investment in Ontario. The Liberals are taking it apart piece by piece. They don't have the boldness that a Mike Harris had to take a meat axe to it. They're just slicing it away, piece by piece—privatize this, privatize that. As new generation is built, it's built by the private sector, not by public utilities. So we face an ongoing privatization and undermining of that stable electrical energy base you need to have good manufacturing jobs in this province.

This government is committed to a \$40-billion investment in nuclear power in this province over the next few decades. I'm going to explain why that's a huge problem, because those of you who are paying electricity bills now, those of you who work for companies that pay

high electricity bills, should know that there's a \$19-billion debt from a whole bunch of dead nuclear power plants, the last generation, that hangs like a millstone around the neck of Ontario's economy. Yet we're about to embark on another gigantic roll of the dice to see if this time we can be lucky, to see if this time nuclear power won't bring Ontario to its knees. But this government is enamoured of nuclear power and cares nothing about its long-term impact on industrial jobs.

This is a government that has an energy minister who has recently made speeches about high prices for electricity. He says it's good for conservation. I'm happy to debate that with him. But I have another piece that has to be pointed out. He said that we need high prices to attract investment in generation capacity. You know what? He's right. If you look at British Columbia, if you look at the United States, wherever you've got deregulation and privatization, you've got a driving up of prices to draw in those investor dollars. That chokes out energy efficiency, it chokes out investment on conservation, and it's the path of efficiency and conservation that stabilizes energy prices and makes it possible for a jurisdiction to attract investment, to attract jobs and to hold on to the jobs we have. The Liberal strategy is to undermine the base for industrial and manufacturing activity in this province. That's where they want to go.

It isn't just in the electrical sphere that they're wrong-headed and narrow in their policies. People living in the greater Toronto area, in the greater Golden Horseshoe, know about traffic congestion. They know how long it takes to get from A to B in this huge urban area. What most people don't know, though, is that it's projected to get dramatically worse over the next few decades. So now businesses are stuck with costs in the billions of dollars a year because of traffic congestion in the GTA. Over the next 25 years it's expected that travel times in the GTA will grow by 40%. So if you're sitting in your car now, listening to the radio, playing tic-tac-toe—you know, one of those scratch-and-wins we heard about earlier today—waiting for traffic to move, well, a few decades from now you're going to be waiting a lot longer. One of the government members just a few weeks ago talked about how, when you go down the QEW from Hamilton, you can see the cobwebs growing on the front grill of your car because the traffic is so slow. I have to say, she's right.

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When you ask the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, who says he's going to put tens of billions of dollars into infrastructure, how much impact his investments are going to have to keep travel times down or actually to improve travel times, what impact his ministry is going to have on making this area more attractive for investment—because we want to make sure that people can get from A to B pretty quickly, that goods can get from A to B pretty quickly—he has no target. I pressed him on this in estimates. I said, “So you're going to spend tens of billions of dollars and you don't know whether you're actually going make anything better? You

mean, with this projection of a 40% increase in travel time over the next 25 years, you have no idea? You don't even know where you want to go on this one.” No, he had no idea—no number, no target, nothing.

So we have a government that does not care about the stability of energy prices, that is welded to private generation of electricity—and thus they are welded to a strategy that will not deliver energy efficiency and conservation—that doesn't care or doesn't understand that in the industrial heartland of Ontario, which is the industrial heartland of Canada, intelligent investment in transportation has to make a difference. No understanding of that whatsoever.

Continued inaction on the part of this government is bleeding the manufacturing sector of this country, and every person in this House who looks at the facts should be supporting the resolution put forward today by Howard Hampton.

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London–Fanshawe): Thank you for giving me the chance to speak against the motion brought by the third party. It is very important to speak in this House and explain very important topics to the people of Ontario all the time. Today the third party brought a motion. I agree with them that we have a lot of losses in manufacturing jobs, but not just in Ontario. Due to global economic changes, we are losing some jobs in Ontario.

As a matter of fact, the third party leader is not speaking about how much the provincial government and our initiatives in this place create jobs in Ontario: a lot. If we didn't create those jobs, the situation would be very, very bad.

If we examine the auto industry, you will see our investment. If we didn't have a strategy for the auto industry, you wouldn't have the many good-paying jobs in Ontario at the present time. Nine billion dollars will come to Ontario due to our investment in the auto industry. A town like Woodstock is hosting the most important company on earth, Toyota, which is going to open very soon—it's going to create almost 700 big-paying jobs; Hino is also going to open near Woodstock; and many different investments in the auto industry: a Cami plant, GM, Oakville, all due to our strategy in the auto industry in order to maintain the good-paying jobs in Ontario.

Besides that, our investment in infrastructure in this province, close to \$30 billion to maintain our highways and that our bridges function well, creates a lot of jobs. Our investment in high school and post-secondary education: \$6.2 billion to maintain the skilled professional people in Ontario. As you know, we live in a very competitive economy. If we don't invest heavily in education, innovation, research and highly educated people, we won't have the ability to compete in a global market.

I think we're going in the right direction. This investment in education, in health care, in infrastructure and in an auto strategy will give us the ability to maintain the jobs we have in the province of Ontario. But in the meantime, some sectors are facing some kinds of difficulties,

and we understand that. We're trying to overcome these difficulties by reinvesting in communities and by overcoming these changes in the global economy, because we are trying to absorb and minimize the effect on our provincial economy.

I think that we in this province understand the need for investment. We understand the importance of investing in our economy, because it's the only source for giving us back the ability to fund the very pillars of this economy, the fundamental pillars of our communities like health care, education, infrastructure and social networks.

Mr. Speaker, you were with us this morning debating a very important bill, Bill 124. We're trying to break down the barriers facing the many newcomers who come to Ontario with high skills and professions. They want to get accredited in this province to use their intelligence, their skills and their abilities to help us continue building the economy of this beautiful province of ours.

I think we've taken all of the measures, we've taken all of the steps available to us in order to maintain a good, vibrant economy. Now we have the third party leader come to us, not to give us a strategy and a plan for what we're supposed to do, but I think he just wants to complain and send a message to people that we're not doing the right things. I wonder what he would do if he was in our shoes, if he was in our spot here. He would do what we're doing.

We monitored the government of the NDP when they were in power almost nine years ago. Back then, I was working for the government. I was working for community and social services. I know the struggle that was being faced by the province of Ontario at that time. They accumulated a debt of almost \$10 billion a year in this province. That wasn't the right strategy back then. It was a foolish strategy. They didn't invest back in the important elements of our economy. They didn't invest in infrastructure. They didn't invest in the auto industry. They didn't invest in education. They didn't invest in health care. That's why today we have a deficit: a social deficit, an education deficit, a health care deficit and an infrastructure deficit.

That's why our government is working hard on a daily basis to recover this deficit, to reconstruct our economy again—which is built on the strong foundations of education, research and innovation, and health care—and also to utilize all of the abilities in the province of Ontario, especially the newcomers, which we debated this morning. We listened to many stakeholders tell us that so many intelligent people come to this province, so many high-skilled workers come, but they don't have the ability to utilize their abilities to help us to maintain and keep reconstructing this province of Ontario.

That's why we don't leave anything out. We want to work together in order to—

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): Partners.

Mr. Ramal: Partners. That is our strategy.

We met yesterday with the multi-faith community, which came to Queen's Park to talk about affordable

housing, to talk about poverty and child poverty. Today, the food bank executive and the chair of the food bank came to Queen's Park to talk to us about child poverty, to talk about affordable housing, to talk about the poor working people of this province. So we're putting a strategy together.

That's why we on this side of the House listen to people. We listen to all elements of society. We listen to everyone. We don't ignore people. I want to tell you, on this side of the House we apply democracy when we invite people to come to us and advise us, when we create a round table about every element in every ministry to consult the people who specialize in every area in order for them to advise us and give us the right direction.

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Today, I'm puzzled when I listen to the leader of the third party talking about the economy. I was puzzled. The person who was part of a government that bankrupted the province of Ontario—

Mr. McMeekin: You'd never get it anyway.

Mr. Ramal: He laid off all the workers. He closed hospitals. He closed schools.

Mr. McMeekin: You remember that?

Mr. Ramal: Now we are back to reconstruct the damage of the past. The opposition party was also part of the game to destroy the social network in the province of Ontario. That's what we're facing now, with poverty and education and health care.

Mr. McMeekin: You've got to do a better job than that.

Mr. Ramal: They were the government of Ontario that closed a lot of hospitals and a lot of schools. They also told poor people they shouldn't be living. All of us on this side believe that everybody—the poor, the rich, the healthy and the wealthy—should work together, should walk together. That is the province we're looking for in the future. That's why we are working hard, as a government, as ministers and as the Premier, to put us on the right track, to fix the damage created by the past two governments.

Today, we're discussing a very important motion, but I want to tell you something very important. I have full faith in our government to study all the elements, all the damage, and to create a strategy to overcome the losses in manufacturing jobs. As you know, sometimes you cannot help it—you cannot do much about it—but you have the ability to reinvest and shift the direction of the economy. That's what we're doing. We believe strongly that the only way of creating the right direction in the economy is by investing heavily in post-secondary education, by creating investment in innovation and research. This is very important to give us the ability to proceed not just tomorrow, not this year, not next year but for five, 10 and 20 years in the future.

Mr. McMeekin: Put the puzzle together.

Mr. Ramal: Yes, it's very important. You cannot do it with ordinary people. You have to invest heavily in intelligent research people who can invent something

unique and put us on the map globally. Everybody knows we don't have the population to compete; we don't have great numbers of people to compete. But we have unique, intelligent and skilled people to compete. That's the future of competition in the global market. That's why our investment went to colleges and universities, to invest in highly skilled, intelligent people to give us the edge in the international economy.

I'm very positive that we'll create a mechanism to absorb the loss of jobs in Ontario. But I believe our continuous investment in many different elements in our economy in the north, the south, the west and in Toronto will give us the equity to support northern factories by giving 15% less in hydro prices. Giving them the ability to compete is a very important element. Opening more markets to those people will give them the ability to continue working and producing and also connecting many different business people—

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): The only thing you're doing is supplying wind energy.

Mr. Ramal: Wind energy—many different things. We're not ignoring any part of our economy. We're investing in wind energy, infrastructure, education, health care and the auto industry. We're investing in anything we think is going to give us the ability to continue to prosper in the province of Ontario.

There's no doubt that the manufacturing industry is suffering, as mentioned, but I'm fully confident, due to our many different strategies, whether it's energy or facilitation in creating more skilled workers to provide the industry, by more connection globally, like the trip the Premier took to China to open more doors to connect Ontario business people with Chinese business people—maybe his trip to India and Pakistan next month will create more opportunities, more markets for our industry, our intelligent people, our skilled people in the province of Ontario.

I'm very confident. That's why I am voting against the motion. All of us in this House have to work together to put strategies together, not just one party talking negatively about our strategy. It's a national issue, not just a Liberal issue, not just a Conservative issue. All of us should be involved in creating a strategy to maintain our prosperity—

Mr. John Yakubuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): We asked you to do that last year.

Mr. Ramal: We are working together. We are open all the time for any suggestions, but we're not open to negativity in this House. We're not open to negative positions. Let's go work together: the only way we can proceed, the only way we can be successful.

The Acting Speaker: The clock was frozen very briefly during the government's remarks, so I've asked the table to adjust it prior to the next government speaker. I'll remind members that you can neither speak nor interject from anywhere except your own place.

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I'm pleased to add to the debate today on the NDP opposition motion. Eleven months ago, our party also tabled a

resolution calling for a comprehensive strategy to deal with the job losses occurring in the province. That motion passed, and yet we've seen no meaningful action whatsoever, just a series of one-off responses in hopes that the issue will disappear.

I won't read the whole motion today, but it says, "That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario recognize that manufacturing and resource jobs have formed the economic foundation of prosperity and economic security for Ontario's working families for more than a century;

"That failed provincial policies are causing that foundation to crumble;

"That those failed policies have led to a recession in Ontario's manufacturing and forestry sectors and caused great hardship for Ontario's working families," and it goes on. We support the majority of this resolution. I don't support one part, and that's the creation of a job protection commissioner for Ontario.

Looking at Mr. McGuinty's approach to economic policy, it becomes abundantly clear that he lacks the foresight to effectively manage the province's economic interests. People in Ontario want to know when he will finally acknowledge the problem, instead of simply taking a band-aid approach to crisis after crisis. McGuinty's policy of high taxes and runaway spending has chased over 100,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs out of Ontario and weakened Ontario's competitiveness. We've seen, in the time this government has been in power, corporate taxes increase some 27% over what they would have been had the Conservative government been re-elected. We've seen the health tax come in, which affects just about every taxpayer in the province—a huge tax increase despite the promise that was made in the 2003 election.

In 2006 this government spent a massive \$5.7 billion more than they promised in their Liberal fiscal plan that they released during the election, despite breaking promise after promise after promise. Over the past three fiscal years, total program spending has increased by 8.8%, 8.9% and 7.6%, respectively. The Liberals are running a deficit solely because they refuse to control spending.

Ontario, in the past, has been a leading economic engine of Canada until the McGuinty Liberals came along. Now Ontario's growth has fallen behind all provinces and is predicted to be dead last in Canada this year. Time and again Mr. McGuinty has shown Ontarians that he has no grasp of the problems and no vision—no economic vision, no vision for health care and no vision when it comes to energy policy.

Three years ago, Mr. McGuinty started the energy crisis by insisting that coal plants could be shut down by 2007, without any regard for how he was going to make up the lack of power from shutting down those plants. I know the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has asked the Minister of Energy, and actually had a commitment in committee, that he would provide the information about the experts who gave the Liberal Party the advice on how they were going to shut down these

plants and not affect the supply of electricity. Reliable, affordable energy is a key piece of the puzzle for industry and resource sectors. Mr. McGuinty, through his failure to grasp the obvious, created uncertainty in the business sector.

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To make matters worse, next he and his government did nothing. Take forestry, for example. An expert panel report was commissioned and some 26 recommendations were made. Many have been ignored. Others were implemented, but too late. Then the closures really picked up. In case you've forgotten, let me remind you about some of the closures: Domtar, Nairn Centre, 140 workers; Cascades in Thunder Bay, 370 permanent jobs lost; Abitibi-Consolidated in Kenora, 350 permanent jobs lost; Norampac container board in Red Rock—I travelled around the province and met Lorne Morrow, the manager of Red Rock, two years ago, and he was saying how desperate things were, yet the government didn't take the necessary action—that plant is now closed; Columbia Forest Products veneer plant in Rutherglen, 63 jobs lost; the OSB mill in Hearst, some 76 jobs; Weyerhaeuser, one paper machine and wood house, 115 jobs lost for the community of Dryden; Weyerhaeuser sawmill in Dryden, 385 jobs lost permanently; Weyerhaeuser in Sturgeon Falls, 125 jobs lost; EXCEL sawmill in Opasatika, 78 jobs lost permanently; Domtar sawmill in Chapleau, 67 permanent jobs lost; Bowater newsprint in Thunder Bay, 100 jobs lost permanently; Bowater kraft mill in Thunder Bay, 250 jobs lost permanently; Smurfit-Stone containerboard, Thunder Bay, 100 jobs lost permanently; Temagami Forest Products, Temagami, 55 jobs; Tembec Sawmill in Timmins—I'll come to that one in a second; Tembec, Smooth Rock Falls, 230 jobs lost indefinitely—it's the only employer in town, and that is the case in many of these operations—Tembec in Mattawa, 111 temporary jobs lost; Tembec in Kapuskasing, 65 permanent jobs lost at the Kruger plant; Longlac Wood Industries, 350 jobs lost; Domtar pulp and paper, Espanola, 100 jobs lost; Devlin sawmill, Kenora, 30 jobs lost permanently; Patricia Logging, Dryden, 35 jobs lost; Interlake Paper in St. Catharines, 48 jobs; Sturgeon Timber, 70. The list goes on—some 4,500 workers in northern Ontario.

Your energy announcement made this week in Thunder Bay was another poor attempt at a Band-Aid solution. In fact, the day after that announcement was made—and that announcement was of a 15% reduction in the price of energy over three years for big pulp and paper operations, those that use over 50,000 megawatt hours of power per year, and pulp and paper only. What about the sawmills? What about the small operators who are excluded from that deal? The day after that announcement was made—it was made on Monday; I was up in Thunder Bay for the announcement as the official opposition critic—I received an e-mail from an operator, and I won't say who it is, but from my own riding. The e-mail says:

“Another one bites the dust for our supply chain.

“The Timmins mill”—which has reopened for eight weeks but then is shutting down—“equates to about 10% of our total sawdust volume.

“Are you both aware of the growing list of indefinite mill closures in the sawmill industry? If not please let me know and I will gladly supply the list of indefinite closures that are affecting us.”

I note that in Timmins, the Tembec mill was opened for a temporary time period, but as the daily press notes, “‘Once the conversion of this log inventory is completed, the sawmill will then be shut down for an indefinite period,’ the company said in a press release,” despite the Deputy Premier today in question period making it out like it was good news that the mill was open for eight weeks, and then perhaps—hopefully not, but perhaps—permanently shutting down.

What does the industry association say about your most recent announcement? Well, Jamie Lim of the Ontario Forestry Industries Association, speaking to the CBC about the announcement, said she didn't know of a single facility that is closed currently that would be helped by your announcement.

Another executive who asked not to be named was quoted in the Globe and Mail as saying, “The government's response has been somewhat sporadic.... What we don't have is the grand master plan yet.... It's taken a long time to get serious attention for this issue and for people to realize this isn't just a cyclical swing.”

Industry leaders have been clamouring for action for almost two years. Municipal leaders have been demanding action for more than a year, and they haven't given up yet. At least a dozen municipal councils, including NOMA, chambers of commerce and community organizations have unanimously endorsed a resolution demanding action from the McGuinty government. Your lack of vision and inaction has had a heavy price for northern Ontario and now it's costing the rest of Ontario as well.

As I said at the outset, I'm supportive of this opposition day resolution, the great majority of it, with the exception of the job protection commissioner. Thank you for allowing me to speak today.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): Are you going to ask for further speakers, further debate? Speaker, I was waiting for you to make that call. It's certainly my pleasure and I thank you for recognizing me to speak to this very important motion.

It is very interesting that the closing remarks on this motion by the previous speaker were referencing municipal councils and other organizations that have been calling on this government to take more action on the job file. Interestingly enough, I pulled from my own Hamilton Spectator a candidate who was running for mayor in the last municipal election. The very first plank that person had in his platform, in terms of what he wanted to see happening in the city of Hamilton, was a turnaround of some of the major issues that were facing our city, one of which was thousands of lost jobs and companies leaving. Well, that mayoralty candidate actually won

election in Hamilton, certainly in a squeaker and a shocker, but I think it was reflective of the real concern that people of my city have, not only on the job file but on a number of other files in the city of Hamilton that are not being addressed by the McGuinty government at all.

I have to say that it's a sad day in this Legislature when we hear government members across the way who are not acknowledging the extent to which they have squandered such great opportunity in the province of Ontario, with a robust economy over the last couple of years. They have a disgraceful record of ignoring the job file. They have recklessly abandoned industry and the manufacturing sector in Ontario. That is reflective not only of what's happening in the north—and I know my leader, Howard Hampton, the presenter of this motion, talked about jobs in the north, and I know that my friend from Timmins—James Bay is going to begin his remarks very shortly in that regard, so I'm not going to focus on that. Neither am I going to focus on some of the underpinning issues that were raised by my leader from Rainy River, Howard Hampton, things this government is refusing to acknowledge are hurting even more than some of the larger forces they point to as the only issues, which of course are the global economy and the global shift of jobs.

What our member from Toronto—Danforth brought to the table—and it's extremely important—is the issue of hydro pricing and what that has done to manufacturing jobs in Ontario. I say shame on you for not only not acknowledging that but for stubbornly refusing to fix it. It's bad enough that it's happening, it's bad enough that we're watching these jobs leave Ontario, it's bad enough that families are hurting and suffering because they can't get a decent-paying job in the manufacturing sector anymore, but for you to sit there and ignore it and pretend it's not happening and hold the covers over your heads hoping it's going to go away is a disgrace. It ain't going away. The only thing that's going away are the good-paying jobs that people rely on in the province of Ontario. So I say "Shame on you" to this government.

And shame on you for refusing to acknowledge the very sound argument that was raised, again by my leader, Howard Hampton, in regard to the way you're whittling away our competitive advantage in terms of the way this country—particularly this province—deals with health care, and the economic advantage that companies have with a health care system that is a public, universal system like the one that we, as Ontarians, so significantly cherish. But you don't care that we cherish it. You are squandering hundreds of millions of dollars with your private financing of hospital schemes. We have seen evidence across the globe that shows that costs get driven up, services get driven down and jobs—at least the good-paying health care jobs—go south. So we can't wait for the next couple of years with this government's activity on the health file. Not only is it going to continue to chase away good-paying industrial and manufacturing jobs, but, darn it, it's going to be chasing away good health care jobs as well. It's a disgrace and a shame that this government is prepared to do that.

The issue of jobs is a big concern to me. Watching 136,000 jobs leave the province over a couple of years is not just an ephemeral concept in my mind; it's an absolute reality that I face and that the people of my community face every single day. At some point, I'm going to mention some of the other communities near mine in southern Ontario that are suffering from the lack of proactive policies by this government to protect jobs. Instead, they ignore the file and we deal with the fallout.

What is the fallout? The fallout is plant closures like Rheem Canada, Camco, Levi Strauss, and Ball Packaging, like so many so many other companies that have closed their doors in and around my community in Hamilton. There are more just down the road in St. Catharines, more in Hamilton, more in Burlington. Some jobs will never ever come back to the city of Hamilton. What does that mean? That means that our city, my city—the city at the head of the lake that was the leader when it came to the industrial revolution that shook this province at the beginning of the last century, right? Hamilton was known as the economic driver for its industry in the province of Ontario and, in fact, nationwide. Now it is a shell of its old self in terms of good and decent jobs that the industry used to bring to the city of Hamilton. It used to be a beachhead for investment and for manufacturing; it is no longer. I would submit that this government has a significant role that they played or, in fact, a role that they should have been playing to keep those jobs. Instead, they decided to play a backseat role and watch those jobs leave our city.

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It gives me no comfort at all that there are a number of Liberal members from my city that sit in this Legislature and they have not been able to have a voice; they have not sounded the alarm bells. If they have, it certainly hasn't been heard by the government, because the job creation file has been absolutely ignored by this government. It's not good enough for the members to come to training adjustment centres and talk the good talk and smile the sweet smile and not do a damned thing about the fact that we're losing jobs like crazy in the city of Hamilton.

It is an absolute shame that, in a robust economy, this government has allowed the good jobs that sustain families—

Interjections.

Ms. Horwath: They want to argue. Then you tell me why, in the last two years, Hamilton has matched Toronto in its poverty rates. Because we don't have jobs to sustain families anymore, that is why; because the jobs that come to our community are low-paying, no-benefit, no-pension jobs that don't sustain families, so that moms and dads are working two and three jobs in the service sector to try to make ends meet. You tell me how that's good for a family. I certainly don't know and I certainly don't believe that it is. But instead of taking an active and proactive responsibility on the job file, the government continues to pretend that there's nothing it can do.

I'm telling you that one thing they can do is support the motion that's in front of us today. They can support

that motion and they can begin to take on the responsibility that any government should have in terms of ensuring that the standard of living, the quality of life of the people of the community that they purport to govern, is not only maintained but enhanced.

That is certainly not what the people of Ontario are seeing. Their quality of life has not been enhanced by this government and it's a crying shame that it hasn't, because this government has squandered the opportunity to do many positive things in this province in the robust economy. Now what's going to happen is, the economy is going to start to slide and, holy smokes, the government's going to say, "Well, gee, it's not our fault. It's the economy's fault." You know what? The bottom line is, not only have they squandered the opportunity that they had, but we're facing down some real changes that are coming shortly. I do not have an iota of confidence that this government is going to be able to help this province get through the next couple of months or years.

I dread what my community is going to look like and what this province is going to look like, because the government we currently have has no commitment to maintaining good-paying manufacturing jobs in the province of Ontario, jobs that not only sustain families—and the member from London—Fanshawe—I remembered this time—talks about education and talks about these other sectors. Absolutely; we have a new centre that's being developed in Hamilton to play on our robust number of resources around the health care sector, so there's an innovation centre that's being developed. Of course, people think that that's a good idea. But the bottom line is, if the kids in our communities can't afford to go into the schools, can't afford to take post-secondary education to be able to get jobs in an innovation centre or to develop companies and businesses from that innovation centre, what the heck good is it? What the heck good is it if they're going to end up with tons of student debt because their parents couldn't pay because they don't have jobs and their tuition fees are so high that, at the end of the day, it's going to be like paying two mortgages, not one, just to pay their student loans? What the heck is that going to look like at the end of the day? It's going to look like a fancy, shiny new facility that's not doing a heck of a lot for the economy.

I would put to you that this government has failed miserably on the job file. The people who are suffering the most as a result are absolutely the families and the individuals who live in cities like my city, because we're seeing it day in and day out. My mayor-elect is very concerned about what's happening to the erosion of our good manufacturing job base in Ontario, particularly in the city of Hamilton, and is concerned about what's going to happen if this is not reversed.

I say to you, it's time you showed some good faith to the people of Ontario. It's time you started sending some signals to manufacturing sectors and cities that provide good manufacturing jobs and saying, "We are not going to continue to allow your jobs to walk out. We are not going to allow your property rates to go up like crazy.

We are not prepared to continue to watch brownfield after brownfield be created as these industries leave our communities." Instead, what you need to do is support this resolution and make a real commitment to save jobs in Ontario, including in the city of Hamilton.

Mr. David Oraziotti (Sault Ste. Marie): It's a pleasure to enter into the debate this afternoon on the opposition day motion. I see that we have a few members in our gallery here today who will be very interested to hear a very informed debate this afternoon on what the NDP has offered to Ontarians and compare and contrast that with what the Liberal government has been doing for Ontarians over the last three years.

I can tell you, coming from my community of Sault Ste. Marie, we have seen tremendous progress under the McGuinty government. It is like a breath of fresh air in our community. We can never, ever afford to go back to NDP representation provincially in Sault Ste. Marie, because it was a disaster.

Interjections.

Mr. Oraziotti: I hear them laughing. We're going to talk about that right now.

Interjections.

Mr. Oraziotti: Absolutely.

Let's compare and contrast a few areas here, because we will take no lessons from the disastrous record and the complete incompetence of the New Democrats—and many of them are over there today—who were in cabinet at the time and made some of these disastrous decisions and foisted them on the people of Ontario, with disastrous results.

We talk about our young people in this province being our future. We created a new Ministry of Children and Youth Services, the first government to do that, to focus on the future of this province. I have to tell you that in Sault Ste. Marie we have an additional 44 child care spaces and a number of new jobs as a result of a \$1.3-million investment in our community. You can easily contrast that to a cut of 6,000 daycare subsidies and over \$20 million from community agencies delivering child care when the NDP was in government.

Here's what Kerry McCuaig, the executive director of the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, said: "The NDP killed provincial child care." That was in the Toronto Star, March 31, 1994.

When it comes to areas like policing, our commitment of 1,000 new officers on the streets in Ontario, in Sault Ste. Marie that has meant eight new officers fully funded for the first time provincially, ever. It also meant that when it came to municipal fire services in Sault Ste. Marie—uploading, not downloading—for the first time in more than 20 years, a grant of \$178,000 to support our local firefighters. We've got eight new officers fully funded by the province in Sault Ste. Marie.

I can tell you, the record is much different when we're talking about the NDP. The social contract and the cuts meant simply fewer officers on the streets in Ontario. The OPP cut 90 sergeant positions and 350 clerical positions because of the social contract. The member

from Hamilton East likes to talk about good-paying jobs. Well, that's the record of their government. When they were in government, they were cutting those good-paying jobs that we need.

"Shortly before the 1995 election, the NDP put together a commission that suggested reducing the scope of the SIU's mandate. The commission also recommended less civilian oversight over the police. When the head of the SIU, Howard Morton, objected to the changes, he was fired by the NDP," according to Tracey Tyler. That was in the *Toronto Star*, March 13, 1995.

"The NDP is just dumping constantly on police officers": Metro Police Association president Art Lymer, on the day that police officers voted to begin work-to-rule in 1992.

When it comes to democratic renewal, something that the opposition did not support, we fixed election dates, as we said we would—October 4, 2007—and we're moving ahead with electoral reform with the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform to give Ontarians more say.

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Let's talk about the economy now: 250,000 net new jobs in three years on our government's watch; a \$500-million auto sector strategy that has landed a billion-dollar investment by Ford in Oakville, a \$2.5-billion GM Beacon project. And we have, as a jurisdiction, landed more auto sector investment than anywhere else in North America, and that's something we should be very proud of.

The opposition and the NDP like to talk about the forestry sector. Obviously, it is front and foremost on our minds these days, and as a government we have come to the table. In our community we've been working with St. Mary's Paper to try to ensure that those 380 jobs of those workers at St. Mary's Paper are protected. I was there the other day when we made our electricity rebate announcement to them. It means \$10 million into the pockets of that company to help them through these challenging times. I might add that it's a time when the forestry sector is challenged right across North America. In Quebec, mills with lower energy rates are closing. So, quite simply, it is much more than energy rates. The dollar has been a \$55-million impact alone to St. Mary's Paper. Every time the dollar moves up a cent, it costs St. Mary's Paper \$1.5 million in lost revenue.

Our over \$1-billion commitment now to the forestry sector: As a government, we're proud to support the forestry industry and we're going to keep working with them. It's over \$1 billion. There's no other government at the table. I encourage the opposition members to pick up the phone, call their colleagues in Ottawa and ask them what they're doing to help Ontario's forestry sector, because they're doing nothing. Jack Layton shows up in Sault Ste. Marie the other day and says, "We support the cogen project." Where's your money, Jack? Where is the federal Conservative government's money? These are representatives who have done nothing on the forestry sector, nothing for St. Mary's Paper, and I'm waiting. Any time they want to come to the table, I'm happy to

work with them. But let's not make any mistake about it: The McGuinty Liberal government is at the table with the forestry sector and over \$1 billion in commitment is certainly tangible. It's more than the auto sector investments and it's a substantial investment into the sector.

We can easily compare and contrast that when it comes to the NDP's economic record: four straight deficits of over \$10 billion a year, which made Standard and Poor's lower Ontario's credit rating three times in three years, costing Ontario hundreds of millions of dollars in interest. Ontario's debt more than doubled. Under the NDP, it went from \$35 billion to over \$90 billion. The NDP likes to try to escape this and they don't want to take responsibility for this: "What are you talking about?" Let's make it clear. There are members over there who made those decisions, who were in cabinet. The leader of the third party and his gang were part of those irresponsible decisions foisted on the people of Ontario.

Here are the facts. Every day the NDP was in power, the debt grew by \$33 million, almost at a rate of \$1 million an hour, as reported in the *Toronto Star* on December 21, 1994. Ontario lost 94,000 net jobs under the NDP. That's 1,300 jobs a month. It's dismal. We can't go back there, ever.

They raised taxes for the most vulnerable, \$160 for those living on incomes under \$20,000. By contrast, when we're talking about the health premium, people earning under \$20,000 are not impacted. In fact, they voted against Bill 2, the Fiscal Responsibility Act, that repealed the Tory corporate tax cuts and the private school tax credit—up to \$500 million into the private school system. The former government and the NDP members voted against that. I'm surprised, very surprised.

Let's talk for a second about education. So far to date: \$2.7 billion of new money put into Ontario's education system; 6,800 new teachers hired in the province of Ontario—good unionized jobs with good benefits to support working families in Ontario; \$280 million to invest and leverage \$4 billion for school infrastructure and repairs; good construction jobs with many companies getting the work with Ontario school boards, because there is significant investment in this particular area. It's easy to contrast it. Class sizes increased under the NDP, something that, with the primary grades, is certainly decreasing under our government.

They froze transfer payments to school boards under the social contract, downloading costs to municipal taxpayers. They said they'd increase funding to historical levels of 60% but in fact reduced it to 43%.

Interjection: Whatever happened to public auto insurance?

Mr. Oraziotti: I don't know; I don't know. Good question.

Post-secondary education: \$6.2 billion in base funding over the next four years, the largest investment in post-secondary education in more than 40 years. We have more than 70,000 people in our colleges and universities

getting the training they need to reach their maximum potential and to participate in Ontario's economy. It's incredibly important.

In 1987, the NDP said they'd eliminate tuition fees, that they'd make it free. In 1990, they said, "Well, we'll just freeze them," but once they got in government they raised fees by 50%. Wow. I don't know, Speaker. It's definitely a stark contrast.

On the energy file: We've been challenged in recent years on the energy file. It's incredibly important to this province. We want to keep the lights on, ensure that we have a stable supply and increase supply so that we can drive prices down and ensure Ontarians can rely on their energy system. Since taking office, we have 3,000 new megawatts of supply that have been added. This represents 9% of provincial capacity.

The former Conservative government added no new supply to Ontario's grid. We have about 125,000 immigrants coming to Ontario every year. I don't know what they thought was going to happen, but sitting on their hands and irresponsibly trying to manage the Pickering project was not the answer. No new supply—that's their record.

I know that in Sault Ste. Marie alone, we have a deal with Algoma Steel to pay them back about \$30 million a year over a 20-year contract. That's about \$600 million for their investment of \$135 million into a new 70-megawatt cogen plant. That's protecting the workers' jobs. That's improving workers' security and improving the efficiency of that mill. It's a new program that our government put in place to work with industry. It's the first of its kind in this country. Certainly, no other government has done that. We should be very, very proud of that.

Today, the second phase of the Brookfield wind farm plant, which is the largest wind farm in Canada, was fired up. Its 126 turbines are now out there producing enough power for 40,000 homes; as well, 20 permanent jobs.

The ASI project, at Algoma Steel, is 200 construction jobs for two years just to get that up and running.

Here's the comparison yet again: The NDP paid \$150 million to cancel a hydro lifeline for Manitoba that would have brought in more power to Ontario. They paid \$150 million to cancel the Conawapa power project. I don't know; that doesn't make any sense to me. They built no new electrical supply, and they cancelled all of the conservation initiatives, which would have equalled 5,200 megawatts in savings by 2000, and in fact raised hydro rates—as the leader for the third party likes to say, "put hydro rates through the roof." I think he needs to take a look in the mirror. They went up 40% on your watch. It is absolutely beyond me.

When you come to health care, this is something that is very sensitive to Ontarians. The number one concern is with respect to physician supply. What happened with regard to physician supply? I can tell you that our government has taken three key steps to increase physician supply in Ontario: 23% more doctors; 90 to 200 spaces for international medical grads; we've increased

first-year enrolment in five medical schools by 15%; and we've built the first new medical school in Canada in more than 30 years, with 56 new seats.

This government, the former government, the only government in the history of this province to cut the number of seats in medical schools in this province, should be ashamed of that record—an absolute disaster. No new hospitals were built. In Sault Ste. Marie, we're building a new hospital. In North Bay, we're building a new hospital. We have billions of dollars of hospital builds, much-needed infrastructure that needs to be repaired that neither of these parties took the time to get right and to move forward on, and they have the nerve to sit here and say today, "Boy, your government isn't doing enough."

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The compare and contrast is pretty obvious. I know in Sault Ste. Marie people are happy with the progress. We've got many new jobs in our community. I've got a list here, and I could go through these: 60 at the finishing plant, 600 for Borealis, 38 teaching positions, 25 in the new justice centre we're building, 25 at the new Flakeboard plant, 1,400 at Sutherland, five new transit positions as a result of the historic provincial gas tax funding, and on and on.

I can tell you on behalf of the people of Sault Ste. Marie, we never want to go back to NDP representation because it was a disaster. Thank you. I won't be supporting the motion.

Mr. Yakubuski: I want to comfort the member from Sault Ste. Marie. He's very concerned that the Liberals might win that seat, and I'm with him—

Interjection.

Mr. Yakubuski: Or the NDP might win that seat—thank you very much, member for Hamilton East. He's very concerned the NDP might take back that seat on him, and we're going to do everything to make sure that doesn't happen too, because we're going to try to win that seat. But I'm quite certain you're in great difficulty, member for Sault Ste. Marie. He's very concerned about his own seat there, so he wants to take every opportunity to get that little shot into the debate. But you know what? The facts don't support his bid for re-election. No, no, no.

Mr. Oraziotti: John, have you ever been to Sault Ste. Marie?

Mr. Yakubuski: In fact, I have, David. Have you ever been to Barry's Bay? You might just want to sit down and read some more of those notes and keep quiet.

When you look at the job loss record of this government, 105,000 manufacturing jobs in 2005, they don't have much to be proud of. They stand up there and they crow, but the record doesn't support their crowing—105,000 jobs.

And they talk about the jobs they've created: 250,000 jobs in three years in government. I want to contrast that to the 370,000 jobs that were created by the previous government in their first three years of office, and most of those jobs were private sector jobs. Almost half of the

jobs this government has created—what they call “created”—are public sector jobs. If you compare the impact of a private sector job versus a public sector job, I think you’ll find that this government’s record is sorely lacking. Not only that, they take a great deal of credit for the so-called creation of those jobs. The member for London–Fanshawe was going on ad infinitum about “the jobs we’ve created as a government, the investment we’ve made, and the impact we’ve made creating those jobs,” but then, when the focus shifted to all of the problems that are facing Ontario’s economy, he said, “But, you know, there are times when there’s just nothing we can do about it.” You see, he wants to suck and blow. He wants to take credit for every job that’s created, and say, “Sorry, there’s nothing we can do about the jobs that are lost.”

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): It’s the old Liberal “both ways.”

Mr. Yakubuski: The old Liberal “both ways.” But you can’t have it both ways. If you want to take credit for the jobs created, you have to at least be willing to take some of the responsibility for the jobs that are lost.

I met with a group of people in the construction industry the other night, and they’re very concerned. They’re very concerned about where Ontario is going to be if there’s another four years of Liberal government. Those are their words, not mine. Those are their words: “Where is this province going to be under another four years of Liberal government?” They’re extremely worried.

This motion by the leader of the third party is directed a lot at the forestry sector, that the lost jobs and the failed policies of this government have caused a great deal of hardship in the forestry sector, and there’s no question about it: 45,000 direct and indirect job losses as a result of this government’s failed policies. The losses in forestry sector jobs in the north have been absolutely staggering, but there have been losses elsewhere too, and it is all part of the lack of an economic policy.

The member for London–Fanshawe said we need to have an economic policy and strategy. That is precisely the motion we brought before this House last year and passed. And what have they done? Zip, zero, nada, nothing. Now we’ve got their own members saying we need to have an economic strategy that brings all ministries together so that your economy, your energy and your environment are all meshing and we can move forward in a way that supports—notice I’m not saying “creates”—the creation of jobs in this economy by ensuring that the entrepreneurial spirit that is alive and well in the province will be able to flourish, not be stifled by this government as it is right now.

The member for London–Fanshawe: I hate to be picking on him but I was making my notes when he was speaking. He’s actually quite a nice fellow. He just bought one of my CDs, by the way. Thank you very much. He said they listen to the people. Well, the questions that have been asked in this House over the last few days would indicate that this government is not interested

in listening to the people. It’s interested only in its own agenda. Do you know what else he said? He said that the previous government closed schools. He made it sound like somehow this government is out there opening these schools. I once heard the member from Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh say, “Our government is out there reopening rural schools.” What are you talking about? My riding alone has seen six schools close last year under this government. You talk about us closing schools and you opening them. That’s a load of you-know-what. Six rural schools closed in my riding. Shame on you. If you’re going to be talking about your record, then at least put it on the table and be straight about it. Be honest with the facts about what you’ve actually done.

The Premier talks about consultation. I’ll tell you, the Premier, the then Leader of the Opposition, Dalton McGuinty, did quite a job of consultation. That’s for sure. That’s how he came up with this crazy energy policy, which is part of the reason that all these jobs are being lost in this province, to the member for Sault Ste. Marie. He came up with this plan, that he says was supported and advised by experts, that he was going to shut down all the coal plants in this province by 2007, no ands or ifs or buts about it. Come hell or high water, Dalton McGuinty promised he was going to do it. Either Dalton McGuinty is among the most incompetent people in Ontario or he absolutely, totally invented that policy on his own.

Mr. Bisson: Is it hell or high water?

Mr. Yakubuski: I’m going to high water. I’m not sure where he’s going. He invented the whole thing, and now he has the audacity to stand in front of this House and deny the people the right to know where he got that so-called expert advice. I don’t know where he gets his advice, but he calls them experts. There is an old saying, “An expert is anybody with a briefcase 20 miles from home.” I think that might be some of those people where Dalton got his advice. Actually, do you know what? He didn’t get the advice from anybody. He made it up. He invented it. He fabricated it in order to be able to go to the people and say, “Look at our distinctly different policy. This is how we’re going to win votes,” because it is clear that Dalton McGuinty will do anything, will say anything if he thinks he will be able to get a vote out of it.

Every day we ask that question in the House, because we now think it’s important: If you’re going to make a decision on an issue as important as the energy future of this province, which affects our manufacturing, our forestry sector, every part of this economy, which in turn affects our standard of living and our ability to provide those much-needed services we do provide, such as health care and education, without a standard of living, without a vibrant economy, you won’t be able to provide those either. If you have a failed energy policy, you’re going to have a hard time having a vibrant economy.

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This energy policy, which was written on the back of an envelope because he thought he could hornswoggle

the people into voting for him if he just told them what he thought they might want—now he stands in front of this House and doesn't want to come clean. For an issue that important, I think the people should know whom he relied on for that advice. Where did he get that advice from? But to compound it, the Minister of Energy, in front of a legislative committee of this chamber, of this House, made a commitment, a promise, that he would provide the names of those experts. That is a promise made to a legislative committee. And what has he done with that? When asked about that in the House, he sloughs it off. He doesn't even address the matter, so much so that I've had to request a late show from the minister.

For you people out there who are watching this, a late show is something that the opposition has a right to demand when the minister has shown so much contempt for this chamber that he won't even address the matter at hand. That's what had to happen here, because if you're going to be developing policy based on the so-called advice of experts, then I think the people in Ontario have the right to know whom you relied on. It goes to your own credibility. If you're willing to take somebody's advice—with all due respect to my good friend from Erie–Lincoln, if I was planning to devise some way of sending a new type of vessel into outer space, I wouldn't get my advice from Mr. Hudak. I wouldn't; I'm sorry. He's a bright man, but I wouldn't get my advice from him on that subject.

Mr. Hudak: You admit I'm better than Dalton's experts.

Mr. Yakabuski: That's right.

I want to know whom Dalton McGuinty was talking to when he got this advice and I think the people of Ontario want to know. If I did take my advice from Mr. Hudak, then you'd have the right to say, "You know what? That Yakabuski doesn't know what he's doing, because he's taking advice from a guy who is clearly not qualified to give that advice."

Mr. Hudak: Why are you picking on me?

Mr. Yakabuski: Because you're beside me. You sat here.

If Dalton McGuinty is willing to take advice from people who are not qualified to give it, then let us know who those people were, or just admit that you made the whole thing up, you invented it, it's a figment of your imagination because you were so overcome by your desire to be Premier that the facts and a straightforward approach to the people of Ontario simply wouldn't do. It was the thirst, that insatiable desire for power, that drove Dalton McGuinty to make a promise that only a fool would think he could keep, but he insisted that he could do it. Do you know what? Most of the members of his caucus went around their riding, saying the same thing: "Oh, yes, we can shut them down by 2007." How do you feel now, I've got to ask you, when you go about your ridings?

I sat on a talk show with the member for Mississauga East, and he sat there going on, "Our plan is good. Our

coal plan is right." The host was a television host, he wasn't an energy expert either, but he didn't claim to be one. He—

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): What happened to Lakeview?

Mr. Yakabuski: We shut down Lakeview. Elizabeth Witmer ordered that place closed.

Now they go back to their ridings, and people say to them, "What were you guys doing? What kind of a promise was that? Where do you get this stuff? Do you just invent everything?"

Mr. Hudak: "Yes."

Mr. Yakabuski: Aha. Yes. Thank you very much, to the member from Erie–Lincoln. They just invent things.

So when we go to the polls in 2007, I want the people of Ontario to know: Take your slicer and your dicer with you, because you're going to have to take that Liberal policy and slice it and you're going to have to dice it, and when you've got just a little, wee bit left, that's the part you might be able to believe, because most of it is just going to be made up—

Mr. Bisson: Slicers and dicers?

Mr. Yakabuski: That's what we need, slicers and dicers, because most of it's just going to be made up as they go along. They're going to be sticking their finger up to check the wind to see, "What do we need to do today, what do we need to say today to try to get some votes?" You can rest assured that that's exactly what they'll be doing.

In conclusion, I want to say that while I don't agree with everything in this motion—

Interjection.

Mr. Yakabuski: No, I'm not big on the creation of this job protection commissioner, and I'll tell you why. By the time Dalton McGuinty is finished with Northern Ontario, by the time Dalton McGuinty is finished with industrial Ontario, if we go ahead and create this job protection commissioner, he'll be the only guy left there with a job.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It's a pleasure for me to have the opportunity to speak to this motion this afternoon. Indeed, I asked the research people in the legislative library to do a little work for me this afternoon and look at the record of the NDP when they were in power from 1990 to 1995.

Mr. O'Toole: Do it without the notes.

Mr. Leal: These are my own notes from the legislative library. I have disregarded the government notes, because here's the real record. Actually, it took two researchers most of the day to compile the train wreck of the NDP record from 1990 to 1995. It's interesting to note that some of the co-pilots of the 747 wreck are still with us today, namely the members from Nickel Belt, Kenora–Rainy River, Niagara Centre, Timmins–James Bay and Trinity–Spadina.

I want to quote from the Financial Post from January 1993:

"Ontarians received more bad news about the province's sickly economy Friday when the Ministry of

Labour said a record of 123 manufacturing plants employing nearly 16,300 workers were shut in 1992.

"The plant closure figure was an increase from 1991, when 118 plants were closed, throwing 14,269 out of work.

"The ministry also revealed that the 1992 plant closures, when combined with job cuts related to companies reducing operations, cost Ontario 27,529 jobs—a 6.1% increase from the 25,957 similarly affected in 1991."

It goes on to quote Paul Nykanen, who was then the Canadian Manufacturers' Association vice-president for Ontario: "Plant closures reflect business jitters over tax increases and the province's soaring deficit. He said 238,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost" in Ontario since 1990 and the bringing in of the Bob Rae government. So that's an interesting first step. I also—

Mr. Hampton: Isn't Bob Rae one of yours now?

Mr. Leal: He's not one of mine because I don't support him. So I'll get that on the record.

It's also interesting to note that we've seen over the last number of years an appreciation of the Canadian currency vis-à-vis the US dollar, from about 63 cents to its peak at 90 cents, 91 cents; today it's back down to 87 cents. I asked the Bank of Canada to provide me with some data on the exchange rate vis-à-vis the American dollar from 1990 to 1995. During that particular time, the Rae government and its co-pilots who are with us today enjoyed a very low exchange rate between the US and Canadian dollars. So during that five-year period, they also enjoyed the discount of the exchange rate. We've seen the appreciation of the exchange rate, as I said, going from 63 cents to 91 cents, and back down today to 87 cents.

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It is clear, when you read the financial pages of most of the business media, that a number of companies in Ontario certainly took advantage of the time when they had that exchange rate advantage, and many of them did not make the capital investments necessary to upgrade their equipment during that particular period. So some of the responsibility—it was even articulated in yesterday's business section of the *Globe and Mail* that during the good times, when they were mounding up significant profits in some of these industries, they didn't take the time to invest in the capital investment to retain high levels of productivity that are so important to the economy.

Interjection.

Mr. Leal: I hear some heckling from my good friend from the riding of Durham. I know he's a close friend of his buddy the federal Minister of Finance, Jim Flaherty. I just happened to find an interesting quote from Mr. Flaherty in the *Globe and Mail* business section on Tuesday, June 13, 2006. I know the Conservative members who are still here will certainly support what Mr. Flaherty said. Let me quote what Mr. Flaherty said in a London, England, interview with regard to manufacturing jobs. It says that in June the Canadian economy lost 21,700 factory workers. I quote Mr. Flaherty: "Canadians

are able to find other comparable, well-paying employment if they lose their jobs in manufacturing." The Ontario economy is strong, generating new jobs. People who are losing their jobs in manufacturing have alternatives to get high-paying jobs. That's Jim Flaherty, their good friend, on Tuesday, June 13, 2006. I'm glad we got that on the record.

I also want to talk about it being no secret that I support nuclear energy having a role to play in base load power in Ontario. In fact, Team CANDU is partly made up of Siemens, Babcock and Wilcox and General Electric of Peterborough. So I say to my good friend from Toronto—Danforth that he could come to Peterborough any time and look my good friend Mike Keating, president of CAW local 524, right in the eye and say, "I'm prepared to get rid of all your jobs, because I don't believe that nuclear energy has a legitimate role in base load capacity generation in the province of Ontario." I say to him, come to Peterborough any time, talk to Mike Keating and say, "I want to get rid of your jobs and those of about 1,000 other employees with Siemens, Babcock and Wilcox and General Electric of Peterborough," and also at a plant in Arnprior, Ontario, in my friend Mr. Yakabuski's riding.

When you look at these investments we've made to shore up manufacturing in Ontario, it's a good record and a record we need to keep pushing forward on.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I was in hopes that Mr. Hudak would be here, but he's not—I thought Mr. Leal would speak much longer.

It is my duty and privilege to speak on the NDP opposition day motion. I want to put on the record at the beginning that, in the broadest sense, this argument is about the forest sector in northern Ontario. I think there have been points made, and I will put on the record some of the responses over the last month. I've gone through the Hansard record to kind of put in perspective the driving argument, led primarily, I must say, by Mr. Bisson and the NDP caucus, on the dismal effect the McGuinty government's policies have had on that particular sector. I see, and I respect, many of the members in the gallery here tonight who are certainly working with that sector.

As I said, these are all from the Hansard transcripts, Mr. Speaker, and you'd know as I quote them if I can use these.

I would say that job creation was a topic on November 2. The speaker at the time, Ted Chudleigh, our critic in that area, went on to say, "Ontarians facing layoffs and job losses were given a new sense of hope." I believe he was talking to the Premier at that time, and he said, "You promised to respect the traditions of this House. Traditionally speaking, a motion passed unanimously by this House is a promise that should be followed through on. You have failed to do that." It was an opposition day motion he was responding to. He goes on to say:

"In September alone, 2,700 jobs were lost in the auto parts sector, and the carnage continues in the manufacturing sector: Affinia in St. Catharines, 250 jobs lost;

Lipton-Unilever in Belleville, 145 jobs lost; GH Packaging in Belleville, 80 jobs lost; Emerson Tool in Markham, 380 jobs lost; and, most recently, another 250 jobs were lost. Minister, when are you going to recognize the depth of the catastrophe"—and he's really talking about the economics, the fundamentals of jobs for the people of Ontario and their policies and the impact on the economy.

I can say to you that that day, like most days, there was no response. But I don't want to attribute all of it to the lead by our critic, Ted Chudleigh. I've taken a random look at the last month of debate in this House, and I'm looking now where Mr. Chudleigh's talking about employment supports. This is on November 14, and I'm quoting again:

"This government would do better to address their frivolous tax-and-spend policies and try to put an end to the stories we hear about the closing of manufacturing plants in Ontario and the demise of manufacturing jobs, the backbone of Ontario's economy.

"In the first three years of our government back in 1995 to 1998, 363,400 jobs were created, mostly by the private sector—about 90% of them by the private sector. That's 110,000 more jobs than the dismal record"—of the current Liberal government—"with only 274,000 new jobs in this province. Our government was coming off the worst recession"—when we took office—"in the province in 50 years."

I must say, at that time when we assumed office in 1995, the Bob Rae government, now led by Howard Hampton—Bob Rae, about to be the new leader of the Liberal Party—had had a serious recession on their hands, and in fact about 25% of their total budget was deficit. Their budget was about \$45 billion and the deficit was around \$11 billion or \$12 billion at that time. So that's 25 cents on every dollar. The economy was going south and the expenses were going north.

What happened, quite frankly, was that there were three attempts before the social contract, and those attempts were authored, I guess, by Floyd Laughren and Bob Rae—probably most of these people were here. One was called the expenditure reduction plan, and that plan was trying to reduce the payroll because municipal and other partners—their budgets are payroll. Basically that's the budget. What he was really trying to do with the social contract was save jobs—not get rid of jobs; save jobs by everybody lowering the water a bit on their salary take-home. Obviously he got thrown out of office because the partners wouldn't agree with him.

That response was just a matter of the job loss. I'm going to continue here, and this particular section that I'm dealing with now was from November 15. It's a question by Mr. Hampton. In a long dialogue, he says, "My question is for the Premier." On the Stats Canada jobs of that day, he says that "under the McGuinty government, 136,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs have been lost while your government has done virtually nothing." A pretty poignant question. He went on in some detail in his supplementary. This is what he said of

the Premier of Ontario, and I think he has some truth in this.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): He raised taxes, though. He did something; he raised taxes.

Mr. O'Toole: He did raise the health tax.

Here's Howard Hampton—to give them full credit, they've carried the economic torch on this very well, I think—talking to the Premier of Ontario: "The Premier believes that Wal-Mart jobs will replace good manufacturing jobs." I think that's the strategy they've got here. "I'm afraid, Premier, that's just not the case.

"You talk about \$900 million for the forest sector. No one across northern Ontario has seen even a fraction of that amount from the McGuinty government.

"You talk about the auto sector? The biggest decline is, in fact, happening in the auto ... sector, which posted a decline of 8.2% in one month." That's in November. "Premier, you have to only pick up a paper anywhere in southern Ontario to see a list of auto parts plants," and he goes on to say that there's a loss of jobs—high-paying, good-quality jobs—in the resource sector and in the auto sector, the very heart and soul of the economy in Ontario. What did they do? Nothing. They put money that the sectors can't get at by the rules and regulations, and I'm sure Mr. Hampton will say more about that later.

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I think the opposition is speaking for the people of Ontario. I think one of the loudest voices has been Mr. Bisson. On November 20, Mr. Bisson raised a question specifically tied to his area—and I'm quoting Hansard again: "My question to the Deputy Premier"—the Premier wasn't here that day; there are a lot of days he's not here, sort of ducking the questions—"...an announcement on the part of the McGuinty government with regard to its new policy when it comes to electricity pricing for northern Ontario industry. I can tell you that, by most accounts, listening to the people of northeastern and northwestern Ontario, it's a complete letdown. You've continued down the path of driving hydro rates up. It has caused thousands of jobs to be lost, 45,000 jobs to be specific. And what have we got? We've basically got the government coming back and announcing something that is going to have almost a nil effect when it comes to saving those jobs that were lost up to now.

"The northern mayors, industry—everybody was unanimous. Everybody in northern Ontario told you that what you needed to do was to get the price to \$45 per megawatt."

They don't get it. They don't understand it. I don't know why they don't, because the energy policy is actually an economic policy. When it comes to sectors of the economy that are primary sectors, especially the resource sector, energy is about 30% of the cost of production. If you don't address it in a specific and direct way, as they've requested, this is going to spell a long-term loss in a sector that will be hard to recover. Through any of the policies that encourage investments in re-capitalizing and efficiency, one of the driving factors is the whole sector itself and the dependency on reliable and affordable energy.

I want to say that this whole debate today is about two sectors, but there's frankly another sector I represent, which is the agricultural sector. If I look at some of the primary sectors, agriculture being one, that's another case where there's serious job loss. We've seen protests, we've seen demonstrations, we had Farmers Feed Cities! I can tell you that in my area even the very successful agricultural operators are now spending their equity. That's how they're staying in business. There's no plan by this government and no plan into the future. I would say to you, Mr. Speaker, as you listen to the debate today, that every job loss, not the 100,000 or 200,000 jobs lost, is a family that doesn't have an income and a government that doesn't have a plan.

Quite frankly, it's alarming that it took this opposition day motion—ours a month or so ago and Mr. Hampton's from the NDP today—to even draw some attention to this important debate. As I see it, all governments—if you look at the economy between 1990 and 1995, they were in a serious recession and that recession affected the revenue of the province. About 85% of the revenue of the province is generally redistributed to the partners: the hospitals, the schools. If you look at the symptoms today, they've raised the taxes, and they have a robust economy, technically, and high-paying jobs that are being lost. That's going to threaten their economy.

Why I do say that? If you look at the economy of the United States, the primary sector there is starting to falter. I can tell you from a quote just recently—this is important; this was by David Dodge. Greg Sorbara has now adjusted his forecast because Dodge and those people know the housing sector in the US is going south, and like a volcano it's going to collapse on itself. The forest sector and all the appliance manufacturing and primary manufacturing jobs are tied to the US economy, basically our major trading partner. He said, "Worse, the new national estimates paper over the distressing melt-down in Ontario's manufacturing sector. Derek Holt, assistant chief economist at RBC Financial Group, estimates that Ontario will grow more slowly this year" than in some time.

If you look at this article I'm quoting—it's from the *Globe and Mail*, October 23—they've adjusted their GDP forecast down by about a point. When the GDP goes down a point, the actual loss of revenue is about \$600 million to \$700 million, but there's an expense that occurs because of retraining, relocation and other adjustments in the economy. So for every point down in the economy, you lose the \$600 million of real revenue and spend about \$400 million in investments trying to readjust the economy.

So they're heading south, and I look around at the primary partners: the universities, the hospital sector. Almost every hospital has maxed out their line of credit. They are carrying a deficit until after the 2007 election. That's what's happening. We've seen school boards—Peel, Toronto and a couple of others—who have an auditor in running the books. They've spent money in education; I given them that. But ask yourself if it's any

better. All the school boards have spent their reserves. Special education, autism and the pressures are real and there.

The economy is going south. They're heading for what I would call a cataclysmic adjustment in the economy. I don't want to be a pessimist, but I'm saying the reality is you've got to protect the primary sectors, and the primary sectors are what this motion is about. What are the effects of it, not just in agriculture or the auto sector or the forest sector—it's all manufacturing jobs.

I promised my good friend Mr. Martiniuk—he has been working very hard for an industry in his community, and I'm going to read an article. This is from *Cambridge*, July 22, 2006. It says, "550 Lose Jobs as Image Craft Shuts Down." Here's what it says: "Shock and dismay swept across a 550-strong workforce at greeting card maker Image Craft Inc. here yesterday, as the plant suddenly shut down because the owner ... is filing for bankruptcy."

The article went on to say that Image Craft sent a letter to the employees: "Signed by Mike Goeller, an executive at Paramount Cards, the letter reads, in part, 'You are not to come to work on Monday and you should file for unemployment benefits. You will be contacted by phone if our situation changes, however you must assume that you are not going to have a job....'"

How would you and your family feel at this time of year with something like that in your mailbox or your personal box at your workplace? That's what's happening in Ontario, and that's the real story here today. This isn't about politics; it's about people's lives and about jobs and the economy of Ontario. More importantly, it's about a Premier, a Minister of Finance and others with no plan. The plans they have for recovery are unattainable by the sectors that are struggling with their obligations, as they are today.

I'm going to wait for our finance critic, Tim Hudak, the member from Erie-Lincoln, to put on the record some of the real numbers, but I appeal to the government today to listen to this third party NDP motion and I encourage members to participate in this debate.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Hudak: Whose time is running down?

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): Don't worry, Mr. Hudak; I'm sure we'll be able to put that time back up for you.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this motion. As I stated earlier today in the House during statements, I am a proud northerner, and I'm particularly proud of the investments that the McGuinty government has made in the north and the resources that we have put into the north as we build our northern economy and we continue to grow that economy.

It's certain that certain sectors are experiencing challenges because of the strong dollar and the higher-than-expected cost of energy. I and my colleagues in the McGuinty government appreciate how difficult job loss is for families around the province. We have seen some major job losses—there's no doubt about it—but we've

also seen some job creation and some very positive stories. I wanted to focus for a little bit on some of the positive things we have done in the province, particularly in the north.

Through our Move Ontario plan and our infrastructure investments, we have seen and are continuing to see job growth across the province. We have seen job loss, but so have other jurisdictions. We are not alone. We've certainly seen that in Michigan, our major competitor, they've lost more jobs than we have in the last year. In the United States alone, they've lost 11% of their manufacturing jobs, while Japan has lost 16%, Brazil 20% and, surprisingly, China has lost 15%. It's important to remember that there is a major restructuring taking place all across North America and in fact globally, as those numbers indicate.

I want to focus for a moment on the forestry industry. Certainly, as a northerner, I and so many in the north have been affected by the structural change in the forestry industry around the world. Every province has been hit by job losses in the forestry sector. We have, however, taken great steps to assist our forestry industry in this time of need and have announced over \$1 billion in support for the sector, which will help the industry become more competitive, secure jobs and ensure that it continues to play a vital role in our northern economy. Our funds will help with the cost of forest access roads and reduce stumpage fees paid by companies.

It will also assist the pulp and paper mills by providing transitional energy relief. Just this week, we announced a further \$140-million program that will reduce electricity costs by 15% over the next three years, to allow companies to transition to a more competitive and sustainable platform. We've assisted our major forestry companies across the north in this transition period by assisting them in investments in energy efficiency and sustainability and by offering rebates that could reduce the electricity costs.

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I would like to focus for a moment on some of the infrastructure investments that we've made in other sectors that are contributing to the growth and success of the north. We have contributed major infrastructure investments in the health care field across the north, as the member from Sault Ste. Marie mentioned earlier. We have a new hospital in the Soo, we're continuing to build a hospital in Sudbury, and we have not one but two new hospitals in my riding of Nipissing. The North Bay hospital has been long awaited. We've been waiting for this project to go forward since the 1980s. It was under Mr. Harris's watch that it did not move forward. Although he did announce it a number of times, never did it ever go to tender; never was it so close to having shovels in the ground as it is today. I'm very proud that we are moving that project forward for the entire community and for the entire northeast region which will benefit from this new health facility.

In the town of Mattawa—I would like to focus on the town of Mattawa for a moment—they have been hit by some job losses related to the forestry sector through

Columbia Forest Products. The province moved into that area and provided them with some transitional funding to assist the workers that were affected. We've also recently announced that their hospital will be going forward—that hospital has been in portables since the late 1960s, when the original hospital built in the 1930s had a fire. This is a ringing endorsement for that community, the fact that it has not been forgotten. We are moving forward with a major infrastructure project that will see jobs in the area over a two-year period as that hospital is built, but also it will form a foundation and a strong basis for that community to rebound and to continue to grow.

In that community as well, we have F.J. McElligott high school, a high school that, under the Tory watch, was at risk of being closed down. That would have been a huge blow for that community. In fact, we have turned that high school around. We have merged the municipal library into that school. We are now providing a welding course at the high school that is co-sponsored by Canadore College, where students are receiving their ticket in welding right there at the high school facility. It's a great investment. It's a fabulous partnership between our post-secondary education system—in this case, Canadore College—and F.J. McElligott and the Near North District School Board. Through the first graduating class—and I was very pleased to be at their first graduation—we had a number of students who had been affected by the downsizing at Columbia Forest Products who had now found themselves the retraining that they needed and were moving forward into a new field. That retraining was made available because of the McGuinty investments that we are making in education across the province. That is allowing for the retraining of some of these affected individuals and putting these affected families back on a stronger footing by providing them with the education and resources they need to find the future again.

We've also seen major investments in highways and other infrastructure projects. In particular, in my area we're continuing with the four-laning of Highway 11. We've seen \$120 million worth of contracts move forward in the last year on that particular project. In North Bay, the children's treatment centre, another long-awaited and long-promised project, is moving forward. We're going to see \$7 million to \$8 million invested in that infrastructure project, which will be located very close to our hospital project. Again, we'll see more jobs as we build those facilities.

Through the northern Ontario heritage fund, we're also making some strategic investments that are encouraging job creation and job growth. Recently, I had the privilege of attending at Rahn Plastics, where we assisted them, through a \$700,000 loan, to relocate into a much larger facility. They've been able to hire 10 new staff at Rahn Plastics in order to enable them to go to the next level and really start selling their product globally.

These are the results of the strategic investments that we've been making across the north through the northern Ontario heritage fund as well as through a number of

infrastructure initiatives that are seeing growth in the north, that are seeing development in the north. I would have to agree with my colleague from the Soo when he said that never have we seen greater enthusiasm and encouragement in northern Ontario than under the McGuinty government, where we've seen a great deal of attention focused on the north, where we've seen the north thrive and prosper.

Mr. Bisson: Where have you been?

Ms. Smith: I challenge the member for Timmins-James Bay to come up with any indication during the five years that the NDP were in power when the north was in such a positive position as they are today.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak to this resolution.

Mr. Hudak: I'm pleased to rise, speaking in support of my colleague the member for Kenora-Rainy River, Mr. Hampton's, resolution this afternoon. I hope some of my colleagues across the floor will do so as well, because there's no doubt that something is amiss in the province of Ontario when it comes to the state of the economy and the flight of manufacturing jobs from Dalton McGuinty's Ontario.

It is, I believe, unprecedented for Ontario now to be at the back of the pack in this country of Canada. I am flummoxed to think that the province of Ontario, the province where I was fortunate enough to be born and raised, the province I've known all my lifetime as the engine of growth for this entire country—in fact, for good parts of that history the engine of growth, a leading jurisdiction in all of North America—is now at the back of the pack in Canada, and I bet near the back of the pack in all of North America in economic growth. The saddest part of that story is the loss of approximately 120,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs.

Mr. O'Toole: Families—120,000 families.

Mr. Hudak: As my colleague from Durham says, that's 120,000 families that now have to deal with losing that employment, families worrying about mortgages, families worried about car payments, families worried about sending their kids on to college or university, young families trying to get a good start in life. The bread and butter of Ontario's economy has always been the manufacturing sector—120,000 manufacturing jobs lost in the last two years. I think that since 2002 we've seen now some 10% of Ontario's total manufacturing base wiped out.

So why is Ontario different from the other provinces? I listened to my colleagues: The dollar is higher than it used to be; for a while they were saying because oil prices and gas prices were high. But why is Ontario different from the rest of the provinces? Why have we moved from our lead position, not to the middle of the pack, but to the back of the pack when it comes to the rest of Canada? The answer is simple: Dalton McGuinty's misguided fiscal and economic policies have chased well-paying manufacturing jobs from the province of Ontario.

We all remember the first major piece of legislation that Dalton McGuinty brought in. Contrary to his

campaign promises, he put taxes through the roof—a tax increase that would have made the old Bob Rae blush, but I guess the new Bob Rae would be proud of it. It was the biggest tax increase in the history of the province of Ontario, meaning that now Ontario's tax burden on working families and seniors is much higher than it used to be, reducing disposable income, and importantly as well, now the highest taxes—I think runner-up to Saskatchewan, who I believe are going to lower their business taxes. Now Ontario is in the top two of the highest tax regimes for businesses in all of North America.

Second, we've seen hydro rates increase substantially, despite campaign promises to the contrary. Third, we have seen an incredible, rapid increase in the public sector spending of the Dalton McGuinty government.

We used to think David Peterson—remember that Peterson fella? We used to think that he increased spending apace. We thought the Bob Rae government increased spending significantly. The Dalton McGuinty government has increased government spending by a rate that leaves the Peterson and Rae governments in the dust—an average of almost an 8% government-spending increase year over year over year—close to \$19 billion more coming out of the pockets of hard-working families, seniors and businesses in the province of Ontario, being clawed in by this finance minister, by Premier McGuinty, and spent in heaven knows what kinds of ways, when you see things like dropping the C for \$6 million. I say to my colleague from Peterborough, thank God they didn't go after the G. How much would that have cost? They stopped at the C, but maybe there are more plans to cut more letters out of the OLG. C.

Runaway spending, high taxes, high hydro rates: No wonder Ontario's competitive position for manufacturing jobs has been dramatically undermined, and no wonder we've seen 120,000 manufacturing jobs lost from Dalton McGuinty's Ontario.

I know a lot of my colleagues opposite get up and parrot numbers; I think they say 250,000 jobs have been created in Ontario since October 2003. But when you look at the actual numbers, as my colleague from Halton, Mr. Chudleigh, the critic, said it's a dismal job creation record. First of all, half of those jobs created are public sector jobs, so it's masking the decline in private sector jobs. And we all know that if you don't have a strong private sector, if you don't have people gaining work in the private sector, then money doesn't come into government coffers to support the government jobs. So I found it fascinating. I wonder if this is one of the first times that we have actually seen government jobs matching any kind of increase in the private sector, reflecting the bloat we've seen in government spending and the bloat in government bureaucracy.

1730

When you compare these kinds of job creation numbers to those that were experienced under the previous PC government, the Liberal comparison is abysmal—far, far fewer private sector or self-employed jobs created under Dalton McGuinty, and don't forget about the

120,000 manufacturing jobs that have left the province of Ontario. Let's look at 2005, for example: private sector job creation in Ontario, 51,900; self-employed, minus 4,100. The small business sector actually shed jobs. So you see a net there of about 46,000 jobs, when you see job creation under the previous PC government of 140,000 private sector jobs in 1998, 274,500 in 1999—I could go on but for a lack of time. So the Liberal numbers are nothing to boast about. In fact, they're something to be embarrassed about when it comes to the poor performance of the Ontario economy in creating private sector jobs under the McGuinty government.

I remind my colleagues about what RBC had to say: "We think Ontario will narrowly avoid a recession and post its weakest growth rate since 2003. Manufacturing is contracting in high-cost labour-intensive sectors ... and is awaiting higher auto production in 2008.... All this despite energy price relief and being one year from an election."

CIBC echoes the same, where Ontario will be dead last in growth next year and the year after. They sound the warning bells: Potentially another 50,000 manufacturing jobs could be lost from Dalton McGuinty's Ontario in the year ahead.

I know some of my colleagues have raised concerns about the job protection commissioner. I would expect that would not be a policy a John Tory PC government would bring forward. Our plan would be to reduce the tax burden and to control energy prices through a greater supply of energy. But I've got to tell you, in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, we need a job commissioner. In Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, we need a job commissioner on every street corner to fight those cuts. And I know how we can save money, I'll say to my colleague for Kenora-Rainy River. The economic development ministers aren't doing much. They're not fighting the loss of manufacturing jobs, so let's give the job commissioner their offices, their limousines and their staff, because I know at least a job commissioner will do the jobs that the Minister of Economic Development and Trade and the small business minister are supposed to be doing.

Mr. Bisson: That's the quietness that we're hearing in plants across Ontario. When you walk into mills across my riding, across northern Ontario, southwestern Ontario, Toronto and across this province, you're hearing silence because plants have been shut down. Plants that used to be active, with all kinds of activity in the processes they used to produce the goods they did, are now silent. Why? Because this government has failed to rise to the occasion of how to confront the problems we have in Ontario today vis-à-vis the international and North American economies. More importantly, they haven't done what they have to do when it comes to dealing with what's in their control.

My colleagues spoke earlier in regard to the job losses we've had in Toronto, southwestern Ontario and across this province, and I'm going to speak mostly about the north, because that's where I come from. But I want people to know right from the start that this is not just a

northern Ontario issue; this is an issue that is affecting us across this province. It's not just in the north; it's in plants across this province.

If you take a look at some of the job losses—I have some of them listed here—you'll note that they're not just in northern Ontario. General Motors has lost more than 1,000 jobs across southern Ontario because of what's happening with their own particular problems; Ford has lost 1,100 jobs; DaimlerChrysler, 1,000; Sears, 1,200; Backyard Products, Collingwood, 230 jobs; Blue Mountain Pottery, Collingwood, 37 jobs; Nacan starch products, Collingwood, 87-plus jobs. I can read the list; it goes on and on and on. It's a litany of job losses.

To date, what has this government done to address the crisis in industry? Absolutely nothing. This government seems to think that all they can do is say some nice things, as my good friend Andrea Horwath, the member for Hamilton East, said. They go out and give their beautiful speeches, they give us platitudes, they give us the press releases and smile at the cameras, and meanwhile nothing happens to address the fundamental problems we're seeing in our economy.

I was enraged as I listened to the Deputy Premier today in this House talk about what was happening in the community where I come from, the city of Timmins, and try to make people believe that Tembec had not announced a closure of the sawmill in Timmins. He said to my leader, in response to a question, that workers were being recalled to work for eight weeks and that somehow or other this was a great thing for Timmins. He fails to understand that the only reason the workers are being recalled for eight weeks is because there's timber in the yard, and if they don't saw it into dimensional lumber, it's going to rot. So Tembec has decided, because they're sitting on the asset of those logs, that they've got to pass them through the mill. They're going to run those logs through the mill and they're going to close down in eight weeks. Then they're going to issue layoff notices to the workers at Tembec, which work out to be terminations, as my good friend the member for Kenora-Rainy River, the leader of the NDP, has said.

Tembec has said to me as a local member and to my federal member, Mr. Angus, "We know that there are workers who are going to be gone, and if we decide to reopen and the market turns around or Dalton McGuinty finally realizes that he's got something to do with trying to get these plants reopened, many of these skilled workers are not going to be available because they'll have moved elsewhere."

The story is the same across northern Ontario. I listened to Minister Ramsay this morning. What was his quote, Mr. Hampton?

Mr. Hampton: Ontario has got off scot-free.

Mr. Bisson: Yes, that northern Ontario's gotten off relatively scot-free when it comes to job losses, trying to make the media and northerners believe that, "Oh, we've done really well under this government." Well, let's go through the list. Opasatika, the second most productive plant in the Tembec sawmill that was profitable, was shut

down as a result of a decision by Tembec and permission given by this government to transfer the wood that was associated with that mill to another mill down the road so they can maximize profits in a larger super-mill in Hearst.

We take a look at what happened in Smooth Rock Falls. A mill closed down, the only employer in town, and 240 employees are gone—no more jobs, plus all of the ancillary jobs that go with it—and this government's response has been nothing. If the government would have accepted the idea that my leader, Howard Hampton, put forward by putting in place a job protection commissioner, we could have had an office that could have sat down with the workers, with the employer and with the community to do the very hard work that has to be done in order to restructure and keep that plant going. That plant was on the borderline. It was making a little bit of money, but it wasn't making as much money as the company wanted. As Tembec told me, "If we have to invest money," which they needed to do in that plant, "we will invest it elsewhere"—I would argue, not in Ontario. That's exactly what Jamie Lim of the federation of independent business said in her press release: "Ontario companies will continue to invest in the forestry sector, but they will not do it here in Ontario." Why? Because the policies of this government in hydro-electricity, on the issue of softwood lumber and on other ancillary issues have done nothing, and in fact have made the situation worse.

If we had had a job protection commissioner, we might have been able to do some of the things we saw in other communities when we went through the disasters in the early 1990s, when industries were in similar situations. I want to say this to my good friend from Sault Ste. Marie. He stood in this House and said, "We have to make sure we don't go back to the days of the NDP, when they were in office, and make sure we never elect another NDP member in Sault Ste. Marie." Well, I say thank God for Tony Martin, thank God for Bud Wildman and thank God for all the people in that government who restructured that community and saved thousands of jobs in Sault Ste. Marie. I say to you, member from Sault Ste. Marie, that you don't know what you talk of, because Algoma Steel would be closed today if it hadn't been for what we did. We recognized that it was a tough job. We understood that that industry was in a very bad spot.

Mr. Hampton: And Liberals were opposed.

Mr. Bisson: I'm getting to that point. Don't worry; it's on my list. I say we recognized that it was a very tough job. We recognized that there were international pressures on that mill. We recognized also that there were Ontario pressures on that mill and that something had to be done. We didn't do the easy thing and say, as Dalton McGuinty said, "Oh, well, market forces will dictate what happens." We got in and we did the hard work, something similar to a job restructuring commission, except the government did it itself. We sat down, my colleagues, Shelley Martel—I remember how many meetings there were on that issue—Tony Martin and others, and we restructured that company to where it

became profitable and became a shining light, not only in northern Ontario but across this land when it comes to what can be done when workers, management, communities and financial sectors get together with government to figure out how to restructure a company. They were basically going bankrupt. Those workers were going to be out the door.

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I say to the member from Sault Ste. Marie, yes, we need another Tony Martin in Sault Ste. Marie because, God knows, we're going through difficult times and at least Tony Martin and Bud Wildman, New Democrats who were there at the time, responded to the crisis in your community. You should be ashamed for forgetting the history of your community, a history that is a proud one that basically says that when communities, workers and employers get together, anything is possible. But you forget.

When we asked the Liberals here in the House, under Mme. McLeod, who was the leader of the day—and at the time, the economic development and trade critic was Mr. Kwinter—for their help, they gave us no help. All they did was basically oppose and say it was a bad idea. Day after day, they came into this House and they travelled across this province and tried to make people believe that workers and companies getting together and making deals, as we would do, was a recipe for disaster.

But it didn't stop there. Do you remember who the Prime Minister at the time was? Was it a Liberal? Was it M. Chrétien? We went knocking at the Liberal door in Ottawa—nothing, not an iota of help from the federal government. The province itself had to do it all alone. But it didn't stop at Algoma Steel. It got tougher. St. Mary's Paper was in the same situation. I remind the member from Sault Ste. Marie—and again I say shame on you for not recognizing the history of your community. It was restructured by our government. Again, workers from the Canadian energy and paperworkers' union, the employer, the government of Ontario and others got together with the community and restructured that company to where it basically turned around.

Yes, we're going through another crisis, but your government's response is to do nothing. I look at what happened in the 1990s in forestry and mining across northern Ontario, and, God knows, it was even worse then. We got elected in 1990. Mining was on the way down because gold prices and base metals were down. Forestry was in a crisis. We restructured both those industries. Was it easy? Heck, no, it was a lot of hard work. Did we have to be innovative? Of course we did. We had to do things that had never been done before. We had to do worker ownerships; we had to do community ownerships. We had to do financial restructurings of all types in order to assist those companies. We had to bring workers and managers together to figure out how we were able to reduce costs. But this government doesn't do that.

I say to my colleagues here and I say to the members across the way, imagine if the government of today were

to say in Smooth Rock Falls, "We were prepared before the mill closed, but even if they did it now, we can still do what has to be done to impress upon Tembec the need do a couple of things. Work with us to restructure your company, and we are willing to do so; but if you're saying to us you're going to close that plant completely and basically shut her down, then we want to take it over, and we will restructure it."

That's the whole idea of bringing together a job restructuring commission to do the hard work that has to be done with communities and workers in order to respond to what needs to be done: finding new investors, finding new markets, finding ways of reducing costs, dealing with all of the issues and pressures that are dealt with when it comes to the problems in that plant. But that's hard to make happen because, at the end of the day, this government is nowhere.

I've got to say that the really sad part is that I thought for a second—and I was saying this to some of my colleagues about two or three weeks ago—that maybe the government was going to get it right. All of us in northern Ontario had been working to say to this government in one voice—not just Howard Hampton, who led the pack, but municipal leaders, chambers of commerce, municipalities, groups like STRONG, Al Simard and his group, the unions, Canadian energy and paperworkers, the Steelworkers. All of them got together and said, "We need to speak as one voice in northern Ontario and demand that this government moves on the electricity file." Electricity prices have gone through the roof, and for those industries in northern Ontario, it is a huge problem. People need to understand that electricity is a major cost of doing business in northern Ontario. Why? Because they're the largest consumers of energy in their processes. When you're running a paper mill, 30% of your cost overall is energy, it's electricity. You look at a mine, or let's say a refinery, and it's about 25% to 27%. When you look at a sawmill, it's probably around 15%. Those are processes that take a lot of electricity, and when electricity costs are so high, that adds to a very bad bottom line.

I was thinking two weeks ago that maybe the government is going to do something. I didn't think they were going to undo the damage they created when it comes to their electricity policy, but I thought that they'll probably come back with some sort of rebate that comes close to the \$45 per megawatt hour that everybody was calling for as a reduction of electricity prices. As time went by, you started to think, "Well, you know, let's hope it happens." I would run across the chambers of commerce as I would go across the north, and for municipal leaders and others, certainly when it came to the municipal election, it was an issue that was raised at the door. We were hoping there was going to be some good news come Monday. Monday the government announces a program, saying, "Hurrah. We have saved northern Ontario. We have announced that there is going to be about a one-cent-per-kilowatt-hour reduction on electricity." But here's the kicker: It only applies to those people who are basically over—what is it?—200 megawatts per year. It's only for

the high utility user/customers—there are only about four or five of them in northern Ontario—and for those who are even able to participate in the program, it's over a three-year period and only if they're able to meet certain expectations as set out by the program. In other words, they may not even get the full amount.

But here's what's worse. One of the people at the press conferences with the Premier to herald this new program was Bowater, and Bowater was saying that this was just a great announcement and that this was going to save jobs in Thunder Bay. On November 20, the same day the Premier was making his announcement, Bowater sent a letter to all of its employees and basically said, "We're still in deep trouble. We're calling meetings with our workers and managers to come together at large community meetings. We're telling you there are going to be job losses and restructuring and closures within this mill."

The government representatives, the Minister of Energy and the Premier, stood in this House and heralded how good a deal this was when they were trying to answer our questions on Monday. But at the very time that they were giving answers in the House, Bowater was sending letters out to their employees saying that there were going to be layoffs and restructuring in the very mill that said this was good news. What kind of good news can it be when the very people who are out there, heralding this as a great announcement, are sending letters to their employees saying that there are going to be more job losses?

I say to the government across the way that you got it wrong. You've got to do a couple of things, and they're very simple. We understand that the challenge is great. We understand that what is facing the forest industry in northern Ontario is a very serious issue that takes a lot of work and a lot of effort on the part of all to be able to find a solution. But a lot of what needs to be done is at the feet of the provincial government. Electricity is a key issue. Electricity has to be dealt with in terms of developing a policy that reduces electricity and does what we've done in this province for years, which is to take a look at electricity as one of the base infrastructures for the province and its manufacturers.

It used to be, for years in this province, that electricity was one of the reasons we were able to attract investment into Ontario. Why? Because we had among the lowest hydro rates across North America. We as a province decided over 90 years ago—95 years now—that we would produce electricity at cost and resell it to consumers individually and to companies collectively at a much cheaper rate than in other jurisdictions. As a result of that, the Ontario manufacturing sector boomed, and in northern Ontario the natural resource sector boomed. It made sense to invest money in northern Ontario, and in Ontario generally, because electricity prices were low.

This government has taken that policy and turned it around on its ear. Where we're at now is among the most uncompetitive jurisdictions when it comes to electricity prices. Prices in Manitoba and Quebec, the two

jurisdictions on either side of Ontario, are over two times less than what they are here in Ontario.

We say to you that there are some things you've got to do around the electricity file. You have to finally admit that your electricity policy is a disaster, that it doesn't work, not only for northern Ontario but for much of the manufacturing sector across Ontario, and that we need to recapture the ground that we used to have when it came to electricity policy and prices in this province.

When it comes to the issue of fibre costs, this government has to take a look at fibre costs and a way to be able to address those issues, which to companies are a big issue. To some companies it's not so bad, because they're situated in such a way that fibre can be transported off provincial highways because they have their own road infrastructure coming into the mill yards and they don't have to haul as far. But there are certainly others for whom it's a huge issue. We need to sit down with those companies and try to figure out what we can do to reduce costs.

The government says, "Don't worry. We have spent over a billion dollars now to assist the forestry sector," and they tout this billion dollars every occasion they have. Let me tell you what billion dollars they're talking about. They made some announcements: \$550 million for loan guarantees to companies and a raft of other programs that they say comes up to a billion dollars. There has been a 3% take-up on those programs over a period of a year and a half. Only 3% of industry has said, "We want this money."

If you're Tembec, Bowater or Abitibi-Consolidated, and you're losing money and you owe money, are you going to run to a fund and say, "Please lend me more money"? That's not what they need. They don't need more money lent to them. They need their base costs dealt with, and that's what you haven't done.

So to stand in this House and stand outside this House at press conferences around the province and say, "Oh, we've given all this help to industry," well, if you have done it, it's only a 3% take-up. All you need to do is take a look at the list of communities that have lost plants across the north and southern Ontario to see how little affect this has had.

So I urge members in this House to reach within themselves and to do the right thing; to say: "Yes, we admit that we have a problem. Yes, we admit that we have made some mistakes in the Liberal government. We will support the NDP motion in order to deal with some

key issues to make sure that we're able to try to restart the Ontario economy so that those workers who have been laid off across this province have, hopefully, one day the hope of being able to find work."

With that, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for this time for debate.

The Acting Speaker: The time for debate has been concluded. Mr. Hampton has moved opposition day motion number 3. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

Will all those in favour please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1752 to 1802.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Hampton has moved opposition day number 3. All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Barrett, Toby
Bisson, Gilles
DiNovo, Cheri
Dunlop, Garfield
Hampton, Howard

Hardeman, Ernie
Horwath, Andrea
Hudak, Tim
Kormos, Peter
Marchese, Rosario

Martel, Shelley
O'Toole, John
Prue, Michael
Tabuns, Peter

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Brownell, Jim
Bryant, Michael
Cansfield, Donna H.
Colle, Mike
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Duguid, Brad
Duncan, Dwight

Fonseca, Peter
Hoy, Pat
Jeffrey, Linda
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Marsales, Judy
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McMeekin, Ted
Mitchell, Carol
Mossop, Jennifer F.
Orazietti, David
Peters, Steve

Phillips, Gerry
Qaadri, Shafiq
Racco, Mario G.
Ramal, Khalil
Sandals, Liz
Smith, Monique
Sorbara, Gregory S.
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Wilkinson, John
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Deputy Clerk (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 14; the nays are 38.

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

This House stands adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1805.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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No. 124B

N° 124B

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 22 November 2006

Mercredi 22 novembre 2006

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 22 November 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 22 novembre 2006

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: We have with us today the 338th Scout Troop from Agincourt in Toronto, and I'd like to welcome them to the proceedings of the Legislature.

Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: During the vote that took place just before the dinner break, I got up a little too quickly and my vote was inadvertently not counted. I just wanted it noted that it was my intention to vote with the government against the opposition day motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): That's not a point of order, but it is on the record.

PUBLIC SERVICE OF ONTARIO STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2006 LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT DES LOIS AYANT TRAIT À LA FONCTION PUBLIQUE DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 15, 2006, on the motion for second reading of Bill 158, An Act to revise legislation relating to the public service of Ontario by repealing the Public Service Act, enacting the Public Service of Ontario Act, 2006 and the Ontario Provincial Police Collective Bargaining Act, 2006 and making complementary amendments to various Acts and by amending various Acts in respect of the successor rights of certain public servants / *Projet de loi 158, Loi visant à réviser des lois ayant trait à la fonction publique de l'Ontario en abrogeant la Loi sur la fonction publique, en édictant la Loi de 2006 sur la fonction publique de l'Ontario et la Loi de 2006 sur la négociation collective relative à la Police provinciale de l'Ontario, en apportant des modifications complémentaires à diverses lois et en modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne la succession aux qualités pour certains fonctionnaires.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Scarborough Southwest had the floor.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I am pleased to have an opportunity to continue my comments with regard to Bill 158. It has a very long name, as the clerk just read out, but basically it deals with the Public Service Act and making amendment to the Ontario Public Service Act.

As I said in my last remarks when we last debated this issue, the key here is that we are trying to strengthen and give stronger protection to our civil servants, our public service, especially when it comes to certain areas such as whistle-blowing. Again, the example to be used is that if someone is a public servant working in a particular division or department in the provincial government and feels that something is going wrong and wants to report it to their superior but is afraid of being punished for doing so, we are providing true protection here for the public servants in Ontario so they can come forward and not feel that their job will be on the line for doing that.

We've already had some consultation on this bill, and the response has been good. The Leader of the Opposition, John Tory, was quoted in the *Toronto Star* on Friday, November 3, as saying, "One government after another didn't do it. I think it is high time that it is being done and I'm glad that they're doing to it." He's glad and so am I. I think it's something that many public servants are glad to see.

We've consulted with bargaining agents, current and former ministry executives, government agencies and members of all parties. The feedback, from what I understand, was constructive and positive. Of course, after this goes through second reading, it will be sent to committee and there will be further consultation. As usual, our government likes to consult and send things to committee, unlike the former Tory government which seemed to like to ram things through, left, right and centre.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Like Bill 107 that you rammed through.

Mr. Berardinetti: If the member from Simcoe North wants to talk about ramming things through, we can spend the night talking about the megacity and how Toronto was destroyed by the Tory government in one fell swoop.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Member from Simcoe North, come to order.

Mr. Berardinetti: But we won't get into the city of Toronto and how the destruction took place by the Tory government. I think the public realized that Toronto was sent a very bad message by the Tory government. I can stay right on message here, because Bill 158, An Act to revise legislation relating to the public service of Ontario by repealing the Public—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: I would like to start off, at least, on a good note tonight, so the member for Simcoe

North, who has kind of had his back to me, I have heard some heckling that is out of order.

1850

Mr. Berardinetti: I just want to say that I have nothing against the member for Simcoe North. I think he's a fine member and he represents his constituents very well. He even sends me a Christmas card every year, which I like, because it has a farm scene in it, which is very nice. I hope that he sends me one, because I have him on my Christmas list this year.

But anyway, in conclusion, I wanted to say that I support this bill. I think it's a good bill. There are a lot of very good provisions in here. Previous governments tried to bring this bill to fruition, but it never received royal assent. The minister indicated in his remarks earlier—I was here when he spoke on the bill—that he is determined to see this go through and receive royal assent, which means it becomes the law of the land, or at least the law of the province. It provides for very strong protection for civil servants and treats our civil servants with the respect and dignity they deserve.

The Premier and this government have been committed to treating our bureaucrats and our public servants in the highest possible regard. This bill only continues to do that, and I'm proud to stand here today and support it.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Dunlop: I'm always pleased to respond to the comments, especially when the debate sort of got off message there for a couple of moments and we started talking about ramming bills through. What a day to actually mention in this provincial Legislature about ramming something through. Maybe I'm in another world here. Was there something called Bill 107? Did we talk about Bill 107 today? Maybe the debate's going to continue on here, but I think it was rammed through. Is that not the Human Rights Code, a bill that hasn't been amended in 40 years? And now we're going to push it through before Christmas because this government wants to get all the controversial issues out of the way before the election? That's what this is all about.

I'm sorry the member got off message on that, because when I spoke out—and very quietly spoke out—the member immediately got off message and started attacking the Tory party.

Let's face it: Bill 107 doesn't look good on you folks. I can tell you right now, it does not. Of all the bills you would not want to ram through and time-allocate, it's the Human Rights Commission bill. It's just unthinkable that that would happen, and here we are—it's actually occurred. You think no one is concerned about that, but you wait. You're going to pay for this, and I can tell you that you're going to pay for it very severely, because it will take away some of the good feelings people have had about the Liberal Party. They will be concerned about the way you have actually chopped off debate on this very special bill.

I'll be able to talk later to the bill we're actually concerned about tonight.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): It's my pleasure to make a few comments on Bill 158 and the remarks of the member for Scarborough Southwest. I'll have to be very clear that, from a personal perspective, the idea of one of the pieces of this legislation, which is called whistle-blower protection, is extremely important. I believe firmly that the problems that sometimes occur—and certainly not all the time, but sometimes—in various governments, agencies and organizations that have large amounts of power, and large amounts of ability to perhaps obfuscate whether or not there is an actual problem, require legislation that enables those people in the public service who identify and are concerned about the integrity of the positions they have and the organizations and people they serve to respond to that in a professional way while ensuring that they are able to maintain their employment. This is extremely important, because we all know that the whistle-blower or the person who identifies the problem or raises an issue of concern often can become the victim of a negative response, everything from transfers that are unwanted to concerted efforts to have those people removed from their jobs and all kinds of other activities in the workplace that make their ability to maintain their jobs untenable. So from that kind of personal perspective, I say that whistle-blowing protection is something that's absolutely important and that I support.

What I would say to the government—of course, I'm not the critic on this bill; I hope to hear from Michael Prue, our critic, later this evening—is that we have to make sure we have the resources in place to make it effective, and that's extremely important.

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): What Bill 158 really does is reaffirm the respect we have for our public servants, who have served this province for over 100 years. Whether they be in the OPP or the Ministry of the Environment, whether they be people at the highest level or the lowest level, they have done an excellent job, sometimes with not the highest of pay, sometimes with never-ending challenges, but they're there and they're part of the reason why we've had such a great province.

This bill tries to reinforce their role, to make sure they are protected, they feel protected and they get the proper respect they deserve. As the member from Hamilton East said, the whistle-blower protection is part of that. We cannot forget that, because they are sometimes in very difficult situations, and I think we want them to bring things forward to the public that should be brought forward.

The member from Simcoe North talked about attacking the Tory party. I also wanted to say that in this House we do attack each other verbally and attack our parties, and I guess that's all part of the game. But sometimes we forget there are good men and women in all the parties. The other day, even I wanted to say that I also regret something I said, where I said that the Tories have been bashing immigrants for 50 years. That is really not an appropriate thing to say, because whether it's the Tory

party, the Liberal Party or the NDP, we've all done good and bad. I think what it's all about is that every member here really wants to serve his constituency and that every party tries to do that, but it's never easy pleasing everyone. It's never easy doing the right thing, but hopefully we can strive to do the right thing, especially with the civil service behind us.

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I'm pleased to be here tonight to have a chance to speak in response to the member for Scarborough Southwest and his presentation on Bill 158. I believe that most, if not all, members of this House would concur that there is need for whistle-blower protection legislation, and we would hope that this bill will accomplish the objectives that the government has set out.

I would also concur with what was said by my colleague the member for Simcoe North respecting his concerns about Bill 107, the proposed amendments to the human rights legislation, which the government has shut down in term of discussion. I'm very concerned about that. Obviously, the government made a commitment to the people who were interested in this bill that everyone who wanted to make a presentation to the standing committee that's dealing with this bill would be given an opportunity to be heard. There was a commitment made the hearings would go into the winter, and our caucus is supportive of that. We're quite obviously very, very concerned that the government has broken its promise to the people who are concerned about this bill, in many cases people with severe disabilities who want to have an opportunity to express their opinions and their views on Bill 107, and this government is shutting down their opportunity to do so.

I think that it's most important. Unfortunately, the opposition parties have few opportunities to continue to debate this bill because of the fact that the House passed a time allocation motion last night shutting down debate even in this Legislature, notwithstanding the fact that the debate has been shut down in standing committee. So our party, as a concerned opposition party, has few alternatives but to continue to raise this issue in every way we can to pressure the government and attempt to convince them that additional public hearings need to be allowed. So we are going to continue to pursue that issue.

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The Deputy Speaker: Member for Scarborough Southwest, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Berardinetti: I thank the members from Simcoe North and Hamilton East, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and the member from Waterloo-Wellington for their comments. One of the central focuses of this bill, and from their comments as well, is the issue of the whistle-blowing provisions and the protection provided on that by Bill 158. Sections 111 to 121 quite clearly provide procedures for disclosing wrongdoing. It also brings in the Integrity Commissioner and allowing people to go to the Integrity Commissioner if they feel they want that route instead of going to a supervisor.

The member from Hamilton East spoke about resources being needed to provide for whistle-blowing. I think the incorporation of the Integrity Commissioner into this process is part of the resource that is needed to allow the whistle-blowing provision to properly work. I also agree, though, that if we need to bring in other resources to make this work, then we need to do that. It's crucial—previous governments have tried to do this as well—if we're going to have a whistle-blowing provision so that public servants can bring forward wrongdoing to their superiors, that they're protected in doing so. We have sections laid out in the bill.

I think that for the most part, from what I've heard so far in the debate here, all three parties seem to agree. They brought similar forms of legislation, or at least amendments to the Public Service Act to try to strengthen the whistle-blowing provisions, and I think we're in agreement here. So let's send this to committee—let's have further debate here, of course, by all means, but send it to committee.

I'm happy to listen to what others have to say this evening.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I welcome the opportunity to address Bill 158—

The Deputy Speaker: Just to confirm, are you doing the leadoff?

Mr. Barrett: No, I'm not.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Then perhaps you could—

Mr. Barrett: I would seek unanimous consent to stand down our lead.

The Deputy Speaker: Apparently it already has been stood down. We just wanted to make sure. Go ahead.

Mr. Barrett: Thank you, Speaker.

Again, we're debating Bill 158 this evening, commonly known, I guess, as amendments to the Public Service Act—the full title is the Public Service of Ontario Statute Law Amendment Act. There may be warrant to refer to it as the whistle-blower act, but for that to occur would require a bit of work. It would require, I assume, some amendments to toughen this up a bit, because there is a perception out there already that this particular piece of legislation would not be that effective in enshrining whistle-blowing within the public service.

I know there's been information forwarded from Mr. Allan Cutler, well known for his exposé of the federal Liberal sponsorship scandal. One of his concerns, as I understand it, is that he sees this legislation as a management bill that has essentially been designed, believe it or not, to prevent problems from coming forward, to prevent problems from being exposed through what's known as the whistle-blower process, rather than encouraging employees to come forward with information. So the concern is, why would this government be afraid of whistle-blowers within their own public service?

We know that the function of whistle-blowing is so important, as we saw in the exposé of corruption in Ottawa. I think of heavy industry; I know it's very important.

for employees, whether they're union, non-union or management, to be able to pick up that phone or write that letter to make authorities aware of issues, whether they be government inspectors, people within the community or the media, to ensure that some rights are rectified. On that point alone, I feel that this piece of legislation is a bit of a letdown.

Going back to the election, I remember many of the members opposite, and the McGuinty Liberals in general, promising taxpayers that government business would be public business. We see no public consultation to date on this one—obviously, no public consultation on a public service act. There is a challenge out there to ensure that, unlike Bill 107, there is a full agenda of public consultation across the province with respect to this public service act. We will find out whether this is yet another commitment from this government that has the potential to be unfulfilled.

This Legislative Assembly debated a motion a few weeks ago that delineated 50 McGuinty Liberal broken commitments, and the number continues to grow. Today, we may well be adding a broken promise to make government business public if we don't get full hearings on this particular piece of legislation.

Yesterday—and this was mentioned quite recently—we learned the Attorney General was speaking with a forked tongue, if I can use that expression, when he promised additional hearings on Bill 107 and then reversed himself. I can't understand why Liberals refused to come forward in a forthright way. Over the three years of this government, what I have detected is what I consider a chronic situation as far as telling the truth. Endless policy reversals on the Caledonia crisis come to mind, demonstrating again that members opposite are prepared to say absolutely anything if it will get them re-elected.

If you tried to take one of these commitments to the bank, you could well be charged with trafficking in counterfeit currency. Again, when you see members who grow so accustomed to saying anything to get elected, oftentimes it is difficult for people in general to be able to distinguish between truth and fiction.

Today, we're debating reform of the public service. When we talk about the public service, it's important to break it down to those men and women, those good individuals who make up our public service, the public servants. Public servants are there to serve the public interest.

I consider myself a public servant. Before being elected, given the ups and down of the farm economy, in particular of our farm down on Lake Erie, I found it very important to secure employment with an Ontario crown agency—non-union. I never really could figure out the difference between a civil servant and a public servant, but I very clearly considered myself a public servant. I had my job at the pleasure of the public and, having been elected 11 years ago, I continue to feel, actually much more, that I have my job at the pleasure of the public. I am accountable to the public. Very clearly, if the public

no longer wishes my services, they will have their say. In this case, they will have their say in October next year.

If there's one positive component of this legislation, it can be found in the sections on whistle-blower protection. It's a concept that has been kicked around in Ontario, certainly in the private sector and within large corporations, I would think, for the last 20 or 25 years anyway. This is a positive. It is true that successive governments have failed to bring in whistle-blower protection to our public service. I am certainly happy to see this contained within this particular piece of legislation.

I received some information from a fellow named Randy Robinson, with OPSEU, a communication to me which made it clear that he did not want to see any kind of structure or system where public employees have their comments vetoed by somebody else in the managerial chain of command. Obviously, there can be no legislated or regulated structure that would allow that to occur. We know informally within the workplace, obviously, that those who report to others, who have supervisors—so many people—could be gun-shy on an issue like this. When I talk about whistle-blowing, I think of people like Mr. Allan Cutler, who exposed the Liberal sponsorship scandal.

This could well be a major deficiency of this particular legislation. Another major deficiency with this McGuinty regime is its inability to directly tackle issues. Another major deficiency is this Liberal government's lack of interest in real debate, as we have seen in recent weeks, obviously, with Bill 107—that number has come up a number of times, not only this evening but today—shutting out stakeholders who deserve input on human rights. That is an outrage, obviously. If they're not interested in real debate, quite honestly I see no reason for us to be here this evening. I see no reason to be here either.

For that reason, Speaker, I call for adjournment of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1912 to 1942.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour, please stand and be counted by the Clerk.

All those opposed, please stand and be counted by the Clerk.

The Deputy Clerk (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 2; the nays are 21.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion defeated. Further debate?

Mr. Barrett: People may well be asking why I would cause the bells to ring in this Legislative Assembly specifically, and I can give you what I consider the most important reason. Again, the members opposite are aware of this Liberal government's lack of interest in real

debate, in my opinion, as reflected in what we have heard recently about the deliberations around Bill 107, shutting out stakeholders who deserve input on human rights.

There always is a compromise in this business. Earlier, during the first part of my presentation, I mentioned that I had spent a number of years as what I considered to be a public servant, working for a crown agency. Much of my work was pulling management and unions together in the workplace in heavy industry and corporations. By getting people around the table with a common cause—and it is difficult, but compromise can be worked out. I don't know whether anything was worked out in the last half hour. I doubt it, but to that end we call on this Ontario government to accept a compromise from the Ontario PCs to listen to people in Ontario with respect to Bill 107, to listen to many of those people who did not have an opportunity to testify before the standing committee. Many of those people we all would know are some of the most vulnerable and marginalized people in our society. We ask this government to reconsider breaking this government's promise and arbitrarily holding input from Ontarians on human rights legislation amid growing criticism from around Ontario.

Just today in the Legislature, Mr. Tory pointed to a growing number of prominent people in this great province of Ontario. David Lepofsky, for one, called Dalton McGuinty's actions a "blistering betrayal." Mohamed Boudjenane, of the Canadian Arab Federation, calls it, and I quote, "anti-democratic." Barbara Hall, a McGuinty government appointee to the Ontario Human Rights Commission, said, "What should have been a broad consensus-building exercise ... was undertaken in a way which ... caused division within the communities concerned."

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant, I remind you that we are debating Bill 158.

Mr. Barrett: Well, Speaker, I would be glad to go back to Bill 158. I apologize, because I am very concerned with respect to what happened with Bill 107, and so is June Callwood, for example.

Interjection: Don't worry about her.

Mr. Barrett: Maybe I won't give you the quote from June Callwood.

But further to Bill 158, and further to Bill 107, if the Premier was truly interested in debate and improving debate in this Legislature, I feel he could do the right thing and allow stakeholders to have that input requested. Shutting out stakeholders, in my view, is despicable. If this government, this Premier and the members opposite aren't interested in true debate and input, I again question why we are here, and in questioning why we're here, for that reason, I call for adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Barrett has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1948 to 2018.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour, please stand and be counted by the Clerk.

All those opposed, please stand and be counted by the Clerk.

The Deputy Clerk: The ayes are 4; the nays are 22.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

The member for Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant.

Mr. Barrett: I appreciate the opportunity to continue our debate this evening on Bill 158, the public service act. I regret that no one came forward in the last half hour to even chat about trying to reach a compromise on that other piece of legislation, Bill 107. However—

Mr. Dunlop: They didn't dare. Slamming the door shut on the debate on human rights: Give me a break.

Mr. Barrett: And thank you for that interjection.

Mr. Dunlop: Sorry.

Mr. Barrett: To be positive with respect to Bill 158, the public service act, I would hope that some changes could be made. If all present do the right thing, it could be known truly as a whistle-blower act, but there would be some amendments required to ensure that the protection of whistle-blowers, which is very important, would be enshrined in this legislation.

As I have indicated earlier, the Ontario PC Party is in favour of whistle-blower protection. Really, what confuses us is why Premier McGuinty and the McGuinty Liberals would create an entirely new piece of legislation, especially when it's felt that appropriate legislation is already awaiting proclamation.

Many in this House are familiar with the name Allan Cutler, who's considered by many now a legend in the public service for uncovering the true extent of Liberal corruption. I should qualify my comments: I am not referring to McGuinty Liberal corruption; I'm referring to the corruption we saw in Ottawa over a number of years. Through people like Allan Cutler, a true whistle-blower, that information that was needed was brought forward.

Mr. Cutler has some views on Bill 158. He sees this particular piece of legislation essentially as a management bill, one designed to prevent these kinds of problems from coming forward and being exposed rather than encouraging employees, encouraging people in the public service, encouraging whistle blowers, if you will, to come forward with information that would be of value to society and to the government of the day.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): This ties into 107.

Mr. Barrett: It does tie in, and I may leave that for other speakers. But I am very concerned. What would the Liberals be hiding? What are they afraid of? I certainly support whistle-blower protection, but it has to be an effective protection.

I feel it's important to understand the things we are protecting whistle-blowers from, the reason we would need to protect these people. People within the workplace, within the public service, often can feel intimidated, they can feel isolated, they can feel threatened and they can be labelled as being disloyal. This, obviously,

can be considered a career-limiting move for someone—two steps forward—within an employee culture like that. Whistle-blowers might believe that by exposing corruption, if you will, they'll be transferred, for example, blacklisted, or perhaps humiliated by those in more senior positions. Sometimes the office culture will be such that only loyal employees would have the chance to make decisions, which can act as a muzzle against any public servant who wants to do the right thing.

I know there have been some interjections with respect to Bill 107 and the muzzling of those people who do wish to come forward. I made mention earlier of June Callwood. I have a quote from June Callwood with respect to the problem with people not being able to testify for Bill 107: "This bill is much too valuable to be hurried through these critical final stages." Again, she's speaking to the McGuinty government: "I beg you, I urge you, to reschedule the hearings."

We do have a compromise on the table. I regret we've had two half-hour periods where people could have left the precinct, left the Legislative Assembly, chatted and perhaps come up with a compromise, a reconsideration of this commitment that has been made, this promise. We're essentially asking you to take a big step. I suppose it could be argued that we are asking you to break a commitment; that's maybe number 51 or perhaps number 52. But we would ask you to go back to the drawing board and open up the hearings. We would be glad to entertain further hearings on into the new year.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the chance to comment on the speech from the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Excuse me. I will take them in rotation. The member for Beaches-East York.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I will cede the floor if you'll come back to me.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for London-Fanshawe.

Mr. Ramal: I'm pleased to comment on the speech by the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant. He started talking about Bill 158, but with lots of interruptions. I guess the House went off for a couple of times, for almost an hour and a half. I remember that he is against the bill. He was talking about many different things except the bill.

I want to tell you that it's an important piece of legislation before us here, to make sure civil servants are protected, and also that the people who seek the service by the civil service are protected. Of course we'll protect them.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: I'm going to ask the member for Simcoe North to come to order and the member for Huron-Bruce to come to order.

The Member for London-Fanshawe.

Mr. Ramal: I heard the member speaking a few minutes ago. He said many different times that we didn't consult on this bill. As a matter of fact, this bill went for extensive consultation around the province before being formed as a bill to debate before us tonight. Also, when we're finished second reading, it's going to go to committee. When it goes to committee, we can listen to a lot of people from different parts of the province, listen to the people who are in charge of this issue, and construct a beautiful, strong bill to serve the communities of Ontario and also to protect the people of Ontario and to protect the civil service, who work very hard to make sure the service is fair, accountable and balanced to all the people.

I think this bill will create a balance, which we are looking for in the province of Ontario. I know the member from Simcoe-Grey doesn't like that, but that's the reality. We listen to the people of Ontario when we go outside this place. We listen to the real people when they tell us about the conduct of this government.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Simcoe North, come to order.

The member for Durham.

Mr. O'Toole: I want to put on the record the time and the purpose that the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant has brought to the debate on Bill 158 tonight. There is no person who has provided more substantive input and comment with respect to this bill, but, more importantly, on the whole issue of Caledonia. He has worked harder than any person on that issue, and he believes in what he says.

I think what has to be remarked on here is that in the context of this bill, more importantly, some of his references—the odd one; not all of them—were on Bill 107, which is in some ways in direct relationship to the purpose of the debate tonight. Because if you look at Bill 158, there are 142 pages of absolute—there are 143 different statutes, subsections. The point he's making is that you've shut down debate on the fundamental rights of the people of Ontario on Bill 107. In fact, it's called the guillotine motion. Does that not ring a bell?

I can say to you that I have had letters written to the Premier. This one here—I'm just going to give it a little citation on Bill 107, with your indulgence—is actually from Bromley Armstrong, the former human rights commissioner and member of the Order of Canada and the Order of Ontario, pleading with Dalton to just listen. Once in a lifetime, you get this opportunity to amend such fundamental legislation for access to the system, to human rights.

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Mr. Prue: As is my custom every morning when I wake up, I try to decide what tie to wear. Today I had to take out my tie, the self-portrait of Vincent Van Gogh, and I could not understand why I chose this tie, but when I came here—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The Chair wants to hear this.

Mr. Prue: —all I could hear in my ears for the last hour was the ringing, the same thing he suffered from, the tinnitus he suffered from. He heard the ringing in his ears that actually drove the poor man mad. I have to tell you, in the last hour it's probably driven me a little mad too. I'd like to talk about the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant and what he had to say, but quite honestly, what I will remember tonight is that we heard the ringing of the bells, and I think that Vincent Van Gogh and all the stuff that's associated with it is what I will remember.

Anyway, I'm not sure what his arguments were, and I'm not sure what he had to say, quite honestly, in terms of Bill 156. I do have some considerable sympathy, though, I must state. He's made a lot of statements about Bill 107 and a lot of statements about which I share considerable sympathy. But in terms of what he had to say tonight, in terms of what his contribution was to the debate on this particular bill, I'm going to have to give it a pass. But I thank the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant for his contribution and for allowing me to experience a little bit of what afflicted Vincent Van Gogh all those years ago.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I was listening carefully to the speech by my colleague the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant. I don't need the notes. It's interesting—his speech reminded me of the narrow-gauge railroad that used to be in Newfoundland. It used to go up the hill, down the valley and around the curve, meandering but never getting to its final destination. So that's what the speech from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant reminded me of tonight on Bill 158, because he missed the important points.

For example, we're finally going to enshrine whistle-blowing to provide real protection for public servants in Ontario, which I think is very important. Here's what my good friend John Tory said on November 3, 2006: "One government after another didn't do it. I think it is high time that it is being done and I'm glad they're doing it," very supportive of our action on Bill 158. So we look forward to seeing all the 30-plus members in the Progressive Conservative caucus marching in and standing up one by one to vote for this very fine piece of legislation.

We happen to think it has a lot of good points: the Integrity Commissioner is going to be involved, because his office already has authority to oversee the compliance of MPPs under the Members' Integrity Act. AMAPCEO said, "We believe the Ontario whistle-blower legislation, if enacted, will be the strongest in Canada and will serve as an effective accountability mechanism for citizens of this province." That's the gold standard for this kind of legislation.

We also went out and consulted with a number of people: bargaining agents support it, current and former ministry executives support it, other government agencies support it, and I think there's a consensus being built here

in the House that all parties support Bill 158, and we need to move it on as quickly as possible.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Barrett: Thank you to the members for their comments on my presentation, not only on Bill 158, but also on Bill 107. I will correct one member: I won't name names, I think he made reference to Bill 156, but it was 158. We all make mistakes.

I think it was suggested I was meandering like a railroad in Newfoundland. I'm not sure what that means, but I would ask people to check Hansard tomorrow morning. I stand by every word that I've put into Hansard over the last 11 years.

With respect to Bill 158, it is so important for all of us to continue to streamline and to improve our public service to inculcate the best principles of management and planning and organization and leadership, if you will. And the control function is also important, something that I'm afraid is a little over the head of our present finance minister; but then again, we are dealing with a tax-and-spend Liberal. I'm not explaining anything that anybody doesn't know here. But, you know, there's an expression that was kicked around, I think it was about 11 years ago, "if we could only run government like the corner store." I think that is a goal, and I think there are things we can look to in the private sector. One of those is the concept of whistle-blowing, something that is very useful and very effective in so many companies and corporations. I think we all agree its time has come to be enhanced within the public sector, the concept of whistle-blowing.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Prue: I do apologize to everyone for calling it Bill 156; it is, of course, Bill 158.

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: Yes. Again, I woke up this morning and I had no idea why I wore this tie except that I hadn't worn it for a while. But it's all readily apparent to me now.

Having said that, this is a bill which has some merit. I always start most of my speeches by talking about the good things. I talk about improvements throughout, but it has some merits. And I start with the rights of public employees.

As many of you know, for 20 years before I became a full-time politician, I worked for the federal civil service. I worked in the immigration department and I was a public employee. In those days, we did not have rights. We did not have the rights that are enshrined in this bill, nor did the public employees of Ontario at that time have the rights, because we were forbidden by law to participate in any way in any kind of public demonstration or to participate in anything that had to do with politics. It was the Liberals, it was the Conservatives; it was all of them federally that forbade us to do things that today are considered quite ordinary.

When I was first employed by that department, back in 1973, little memoranda would circulate within my workplace telling me that I could not participate in elections. I

could not put an election sign on my lawn. I could not attend a meeting. I could not ask questions of people who were running for political office. I could not donate money. I could not support a candidate. I could not knock on the doors. All of those things happened as recently as 1973. That was the law as it was interpreted.

Mr. O'Toole: The Liberals will do that.

Mr. Prue: It wasn't just the Liberals; it was the Conservatives too. My friend here—

Mr. O'Toole: Very briefly.

Mr. Prue: No, not very briefly. In the Mulroney years, all of those things were there too, throughout that whole process. Public employees on the federal and the provincial levels were denied basic human rights, basic political rights to do what any citizen takes for granted. I think about this bill and who is still denied. I understand the rationale; I do understand the rationale of the government to continue the denial to certain people.

You deny this right to this day, and in this bill, to the Ontario Provincial Police. Now, there are some who would opine that that ought not to be done. An ordinary constable on the beat, although he or she does enforce the law, has, in my view, the right to express a political opinion. That is not enshrined in this bill, and I want the government to think very carefully about—I know there's two arguments to this—whether or not police officers, those who are not in command, those who are not in charge of stations, those who are not in charge, should have the right. I can understand why Mr. Fantino or his successor would not be entitled to do that, but I really have to question why ordinary police officers would still be denied this right.

I understand how deputy ministers would be denied the right, because of course they are the ones who make the laws, who put the laws before the politicians, who are the movers and the shakers behind what is decided. So I'm not giving any difficulty to that.

There is also the whole issue of the directors. When I read this bill, and I try on all occasions to read the bill as best I can, what jumped out at me is that directors—bizarrely, directors—have the right to decline to participate in politics unless it's related to their ministry. So if they in a particular ministry, and if the minister or the political master says, "You must come out and support me in terms of a particular bill, particularly at times of election," under this law they have the right to decline unless it's related to their ministry. So if it is related to their ministry, they have to go out and say good things. These individuals may not in all cases be in accordance with the government of the day and what they're trying to do. I can think of past governments, this government; I know that there were public employees who were not in agreement. I know that when the Conservatives were in power, many, many public employees and many people at the deputy ministerial level were not in agreement with what was being done. But under the terms and conditions of this bill, they will not have the right to decline to support that. They will have only the right to decline when it is outside of their particular ministry.

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I ask the government to look very carefully at this, because you are asking people to do something which is contrary to their beliefs, contrary to the rights that every other citizen would have, and that is the right to say that they disagree. If the only right they have is to decline and say, "I'm not going out to knock on doors. I'm not going out to support you. I'm not going to go out and say good things about you, your government and this particular bill, of which I am part of the ministry," then I believe they should have an unqualified right. If they do not have the right to take a proactive role, then I do not believe that they should be denied the right to simply say, "I'm not participating because I am not in accord." I ask the members opposite to look at this particular section.

I look at the history of all of this. I ran twice for federal office. Back in 1979-80, it was a winter election. You'll remember the Joe Clark government fell. The whole thing was about the gas tax. I got a phone call one day, as a federal civil servant, asking if I would be the NDP candidate in Scarborough Centre. I was flattered and honoured, and probably did a very foolish thing and agreed to be that candidate. What I learned about being in the civil service at that time was that this involved a great deal of difficulty, a great deal of sacrifice to anyone who was perhaps, like Van Gogh, just a little bit bizarre, a little bit eccentric, who wanted to give up a safe, cushy civil service job and go off to politics, because a whole bunch of things happen to public employees who do that.

The first thing that happened to me—I remember to this day my acceptance speech—was that I was a marked man, because literally from that day in the federal civil service, after having had four promotions in the previous couple of years, working my way up the ladder, up the ranks—that was the second-last promotion I ever had in all of my 20 years, because from that point on, I was somebody who was different. I was somebody who had played his or her colour. I was the person who had said, "I want to run for the New Democratic Party." I wasn't with the party in power or even the party in opposition; I was somebody else. That really made a huge and profound effect.

What else happened, though, what many members may not realize, and what even happens under the terms and conditions of your bill, is that a public employee who announces that they want to run in the election must resign or must take a leave of absence that is approved by the government. I know when I did it they allowed me to take a leave of absence because I was at an intermediate level of what was called the program administrators, but it was contingent upon my not embarrassing the government at all within the period of time of the election. So I took a leave of absence.

I took a leave of absence from the day of the nomination, not from the day of the election but from the day of the nomination, and for the next 12 weeks got absolutely no pay. I want you all to think about what this involves for most ordinary mortals, to go about a quarter of a year with absolutely no pay. I want, even to this day, to thank

my wife for putting up with that, because she had to carry both of us for 12 weeks while I ran off on an election in which there was very little chance of my actually being successful.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): Did you pay her back?

Mr. Prue: Of course. I've paid her back in spades, I hope.

Not only did I do that once—and I lost that election in 1979-80; the Joe Clark government fell; there was a Liberal tide; the Liberals won that election—but in 1984 they phoned me up again and said, "We want you to be our candidate. We thought you did a really good job the last time. Will you run again?" Like a trout rising to the bait, I was there and ran again. And literally the same thing happened again: 12 weeks with no pay, 12 weeks running in an election—again guaranteed at that time that I would probably never get another promotion, because I did get one between those two periods. I never did get another promotion. It's what civil servants, public employees, expect will happen when they exercise a basic right that every single person in this room has exercised; every single person who is here has chosen to do this. But I will tell you that no one pays the cost more than a public employee.

I do remember something remarkable happening in 1984, again in the riding of Scarborough Centre. We tried to make an issue of the fact that public employees could not participate in the electoral process, and we did make an issue of it. We organized a day called "Civil Service Bag Day." I organized 20 or 30 or 40 public employees who worked for the government of Canada, and they came out on one particular day wearing paper bags. They looked like Igor Gouzenko—if some of you are old enough, you'll remember him. They all had paper bags with holes cut out for eyes and a mouth, and they came out to meet the press. They were going to knock on doors with me. It was against the law, and had they been caught, they would have been fired from their jobs; they would have been doing something that was contrary to law. But 20 or 30 or 40 of them came out that day. We had buttons made up. I still have a couple at home in my button collection: Civil Service Bag Day 1984. They went out knocking on doors. Of course, it was the number one item on the news that night, that civil servants were revolting. You can take that however you want, because they were revolting that day.

One of those public employees had the guts—and I have to say the guts—to actually take the paper bag off her head that day and challenge the government of Canada to fire her for coming out to knock on doors with me, her colleague. Her name was Susan Giampietri. I haven't seen her in a number of years, but I know she's still here in Toronto somewhere and, I believe, is still working for the immigration department. She had the guts to take the bag off her head and challenge the federal government to fire her, to take her to court for exercising a political right that any other Canadian citizen had. Of course the Canadian government would not do that, because they understood that the law upon which public employees had to

rely was a bad law. It was a law that was probably not enforceable. It was a law that would not stand up under the Constitution. In fact, they did nothing to that very brave woman. I thank her to this day for having that kind of guts.

We think this bill is a step forward in terms of this provision. It's a step forward. What we need to do in the long term, though, is allow every citizen political rights. I understand that some of that will have to be defined for deputy ministers. I understand that some of it may have to be defined as we go down the ranks. I even understand that some people would have considerable reluctance at police officers being able to exercise a modicum of political rights. But in the end, we need to exercise our discretion on a balance of what those people can bring to political office, what they can bring to the political debate, what rights they have to participate in something that we, as Canadians, consider normal and natural.

I'm asking that the framers of this bill look at that, because although it is better, it could be best, it could be far beyond what it is, to allow people to exercise something that was denied to me a scant 22 years ago. It was denied to me and to the people I worked with 20 or 22 years ago. Please end those days and give political freedom to all public employees. They deserve that political freedom, the same as anyone who is a farmer, the same as anyone who works in a factory, the same as anyone who works in an office, the same as anyone who works for private enterprise. They deserve that same freedom. I would like to see, when this bill is finished, that they are there and that they have those same rights.

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I'd like to deal with the whistle-blowing aspect. Public employees have rights and have had rights for a few years in terms of whistle-blowing privileges, where they can talk about governments doing bad things. But it is ambiguously defined in the terms and conditions of the bill. It is ambiguous. I'd like the members to look at the whole spectacle of Adscam. If you look at everything that happened in Adscam, if you look at everything in Gomery and what flowed from all of that, it shows that a public employee who truly believes in his or her job, a public employee who believes they are there for the people and not necessarily for the politicians, believes they are there to help the institution of Parliament or the Legislature, are really true heroes.

I go back to the 1993 law that Bob Rae and the NDP government passed. Unfortunately, I have no idea what happened between 1993 and 1995, after this law was passed. I am still perplexed about why it was never proclaimed into law. It set up what I think was actually superior to what is before us today. It set up an independent counsel who reported directly to the Legislature, somebody who was not the Integrity Commissioner. It was somebody who was an independent counsel to whom a public employee could go, and that independent counsel reported directly to the Legislature. They reported to the Legislature, they investigated on behalf of the Legislature and they—I can't read my last word here

with glasses, and it's a word I don't want to miss; "protected," that's it—they protected the public employee for the Legislature.

What is suggested now is the Integrity Commissioner. I have great respect for the Integrity Commissioner, great respect for that office and for what he does. I have great respect that, under this bill, if a public employee goes before the Integrity Commissioner, his or her comments will be listened to. But we on this side of the House have some difficulty understanding how a tiny office like the Integrity Commissioner is going to be able to deal with whistle-blowing if there are more than one or two per year. I have no way of knowing how many public employees, once freed of the burden and once safe in keeping their jobs, will come forward. But we do know that the integrity office has the Integrity Commissioner and one staff person. We've all met both of them. We know where the office is. We know who they are. We know because once a year we have to go and submit our details to the Integrity Commissioner and his staff. That's who they are. That's all there is there. This is an additional burden upon that office, and I am not sure, under the terms and conditions of this bill or the regulations that will flow from it, whether the Integrity Commissioner will have additional staff or resources to deal with these very important issues.

I go back again to my public employee days. I go back to whistle-blowers I knew whom I worked with and what happened to them. I go back and look at all the whistle-blowers in the history of this country and of this province and what has happened to those public employees who had the guts to come forward.

I remember a gentleman I worked with; he worked at the Immigration Appeal Board, which was the precursor of the Immigration and Refugee Board. His name was Keith Forgie. I hope that one day Keith Forgie will see this transcript. I doubt very much that he'll be watching tonight, but if he is, I hope he'll enjoy this too.

This was a man who worked as a deputy registrar at the Immigration Appeal Board, and he uncovered what he believed—I'm not sure; I'm not going to say whether it was true or not, but what he believed—was wrongdoing by that body. He came forward and bravely told a lawyer, and the lawyer in turn told the press, the press got involved, and in the end all that happened to Keith Forgie for uncovering what he thought was wrongdoing by that board, which after all determined the lives of refugee claimants and of permanent residents who found themselves under a deportation order, and he believed that some of the decisions were not made in the best judicial tradition—all that happened to him in the end was that he got fired.

It was one of the most summary of firings I ever had the experience to witness. He was fired without so much as an opportunity to defend himself, without their even—he asked what evidence they had that he had done things contrary to law, and they refused to do it. They told him, "You've had your opportunity and all you've done is question what evidence we have against you," and he

was fired. He was fired and he lost all the appeals, and the federal civil service and the Public Service Commission and everything shut around him.

All he did was point out where he thought, where he believed, that refugee claimants and permanent residents who had run afoul of the law were not getting a hearing that he felt was in their best interest, that was free of, and not tainted by, any kind of bias. I'm not saying he was right. I'm only saying that this was his opinion, and this is what happened to him. I wish him well. To this day I don't know where he is. I haven't seen him since. But that's what happened to one public employee with whom I worked. There were others, but I'm not going to go into them.

I look to my other experience at the city of Toronto. A public employee came forward, and a couple of pretty brave politicians, one of whom is not here tonight—I shouldn't say that, but it's Mr. Balkissoon. I want to talk about what he had to do around the whole leasing scandal at the city of Toronto, because what he did was pretty brave too. As a member of the audit committee—there were only three of us; I was the second member. He brought forward some of the original details and talked about what was happening in the leasing scandal at the city of Toronto. Then, after he brought that forward, a whole bunch of public employees started to talk about some of the things they thought were just a little irregular.

The city of Toronto went through a whole cathartic exercise; they went through a whole looking at—Madam Justice Bellamy came out and interviewed and cross-examined hundreds and hundreds of witnesses in thousands of hours of testimony to try to determine how the city of Toronto was literally, in my view, cheated out of hundreds of thousands or millions of dollars—they went way over budget in terms of ordinary computer leasing—and whether or not some of the individuals associated, who were members of council or who were lobbyists, had profited immensely from the whole exercise.

But in the end, it was the public employees who bore the brunt of the backlash; it was the public employees, even at senior levels, who were let go, who were fired, who were forced to resign. In terms of the politicians, one of them didn't get elected when he ran for mayor, probably deservedly so, but it was the public employees who paid the price, and I still remember that.

I look at the sorry spectacle of Adscam, the sorry spectacle of everything that happened. A brave public employee, Allan Cutler, came forward and said that the procurement policy of the federal government was not right. People don't realize or remember today what happened to him when he first came forward. He came forward with this, and the first thing that happened after he lodged his complaint was that he was transferred to technical and special services, a demotion within his own place of work. That's what happened to him at first. He was later exonerated, but the first thing that happened to him was that he no longer could work where he had worked for years. That same public employee who was

looking out for the best interests of the people of Canada, for the Parliament and for all the things we hold dear—the first thing that happened to him is that his superiors demoted him, transferred him, put him into a job that was not his job and sent him to technical and special services, whatever that meant. God bless him. He kept absolutely meticulous notes. He had the smarts to keep meticulous notes. I understand they were more than an inch thick, outlining and detailing everything that had been done improperly around the whole Adscam. So when Justice Gomery held his inquiry, the basis of that inquiry and everything he had to look for was not something that came out of his head—and he is a brilliant man; I take nothing away from him—but came from the meticulous notes of the civil servant who, in the end, had the best interests of the people of Canada.

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We all know how that resulted. We all know that in the end, he was exonerated. He is considered today by many to be a true hero of the public service. And we know that those who transgressed, those who did wrong, those who cheated, some of them went to jail, and for those political people, they found themselves on the receiving end of a very large and deserved backlash.

So I'm asking the members opposite in this bill to think about the public employees who come forward. I thank you for the bill. I thank you for the provisions that allow for whistle-blowing. But I also want you to understand that when you put this law into effect, when the law is finished, when the Lieutenant Governor in Council comes forward with regulations, you need to protect these individuals. You need to protect the Allan Cutlers. You even need to protect the people like Keith Forgie all those years ago. When they come forward in good faith, when they provide information of wrongdoing, they need to be protected. They don't need to be demoted, they don't need to be sent to Coventry, they don't need to be fired; they need to be praised. We need to see that in the regulations, and potentially we need to see an increase in what is afforded to them in the body of this bill, when and if this bill goes to committee.

I'd like to talk briefly about successor rights. This is something, of course, that as a former union person, as a New Democrat, you would expect me to talk about. Successor rights are an important and integral part of this bill. I appreciate what is contained within the body of the bill in terms of ordinary union members having rights that were stripped from them by the previous government. These are simple, they are basic, and sadly—better late than never—it's taken three years for this to be remedied. The former government took away the successor rights of public employees who, after all, were doing the very best service they could possibly do for the people of this province.

It happened when as workers they found their jobs contracted out. As workers, they found that they were transferred from one department to another, or to a crown agency or to a place that did not acknowledge successor rights. These workers found that after 10, 15, 20 or 25

years of faithful service to the government and to the people of Ontario, they were stripped of what they had considered basic and what every other worker who remained in their job had kept. To them and to me they were important principles. Some of them lost wages in that they were demoted; they were sent to places where the money was not as good. Some of them lost seniority. Almost all of them lost seniority, because when you go from one department to another or to a crown agency, literally you start all over again. So even though you worked for 20 or 30 years, you were subject to layoff as if you were a brand new person. You were subject to not having your holidays approved, as if you were somebody who had just arrived on the scene. You were subject to all of the vagaries of not having seniority. Some of them lost benefits, because benefits accrue with the amount of time you have worked for a government or an agency. They have lost those benefits and, quite clearly, many of them lost an opportunity for union involvement, to belong to a movement that protected those rights and the rights of people who worked with them. Some people hold that union involvement very dearly.

Crown employees under this act still lack that right. I'm asking for the members opposite to look at giving crown employees the same rights as people who work for the general civil service. Take a look at that. Take a look and ask yourself why crown employees in some of the crown agencies do not have the same rights as public employees. I think they should have that same right. In this bill, the members opposite and the government have seen fit—people who work for you in your offices, should you one day not be in power or seek not to renew public office, have rights under this act to look for other employment within the public service. I wish you would share with the crown employees the same rights that the people who work for you in your offices have today. Please look to share that, because these are people who are dedicated to this province every bit as much as others.

I look back to what the members opposite like to call the eight dark years or the eight lost years of the Harris government. I am no fan of Mr. Harris; I have told my Conservative colleagues that many times. I cast no aspersions on him for being a Conservative, because to this day I admire many Conservatives: Bill Davis and John Robarts, who as a teenager and a young man I had the opportunity to meet and even cheer on on occasion. But he was a bitter man when it came to people who worked for the public service. He was a bitter man when it came to people who were unionized. He stripped the workers of their rights, and it is essential that those rights be given back.

There were thousands of individuals, literally thousands of them, who lost their jobs in those eight years. There were thousands of them who took wage cuts, who suffered benefit cuts, who lost their pension plans. And, quite literally, throughout all of this, there was an enormous cost to OPSEU. Thousands of dollars, maybe millions of dollars were lost to that union and to the members in fighting through the courts, through the tribunals and

everything else to get those same rights back, the jobs back, the wage cuts back, the benefits back, the pension plans back. It is only in these last few months that some or all of that is starting to come together.

I am asking the members opposite to take a look at what dedicated men and women have lost in this province, people who have dedicated their lives to the service of the people of Ontario, to the government, no matter what it be—NDP, Conservative or Liberal—and to this Legislature. I am asking you to recognize them, not as people who should be fired, not as people who should have their wages or benefits cut, but as true heroes, men and women who have sacrificed much for the people of this province. I am asking you within the confines of this bill to give that back to them.

Most assuredly, members in this House will be aware that OPSEU has been fighting over the last three years and has recently been successful in getting back union membership wages, pension plans and benefits for people who worked at the North Bay and Whitby psychiatric institutions when the government determined to divest those, when it determined to privatize them, when they were determined to change them into agencies, when they were determined to change the working conditions. That union has fought for three years and has been successful in forcing the new employers to recognize the long-standing public employees who work there. They have got some of those, and perhaps all of those, rights back.

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I am asking all the members to recognize and appreciate what has gone on. I am asking you, in the totality of this bill, to look at what can and what should be done. It is not sufficient, in my view, to simply say that it's going to be better. I acknowledge that what is in this bill is better. It is up to each of us to recognize the contributions of these exceptional people who have chosen public employment and service. The public service often does not pay as much as you could make in private enterprise. It often has long hours. It often has working conditions that others would not want. It has a bureaucracy which can be mind-numbing on occasion. But every single public employee deserves our respect and gratitude, whether that be for political rights—in my view, they have and should have no fewer political rights than any other individual in this province—or whether it comes to their rights to blow the whistle on what is wrong—and they are in the best position to see if people are doing something wrong and contrary to the wishes of this Legislature, of the government in general. If they blow the whistle, they should be protected. And if they need the successor rights that this bill goes partway to restoring, then so be it; it needs to be done.

I haven't heard yet, because I wasn't here the last day, whether this is going to committee, but I trust it will. I'm looking for a nod from anyone that this is going to committee. I trust it will go to committee and we can hear from these public employees, from the unions that represent them, from learned people about political rights

and whether any damage whatsoever will be done to this government if ordinary police officers are given rights that you and I take for granted, or that any public employee in senior management positions would have the right not to support a ministerial directive or a directive of the government without fear of losing his or her position. I want to hear what the justification is for parts of this bill that still hold on to those old beliefs that were wrong 25 years ago when they were perpetrated against me and the colleagues who worked for me in the federal civil service. I want to hear that those days are gone and that this government is looking to a future when public employees have the same rights as we would expect for anyone else.

In conclusion—and I don't think I'm going to take my whole time, because I've said everything I need to say—I just want to ask that this government commit itself to putting this before committee. I want them to look at what they can do to improve the bill for the tens of thousands of people who call the province of Ontario their employer. I want them to look at the crown agencies in the same way they do ordinary public employees. I want them to look at the restrictions that they continue to put on and see how they can be changed and be brought even better into the 21st century than they have under the terms and conditions of this bill. Last but not least, I want them to make sure that any public employee, at whatever level, who comes forward to blow the whistle, to say that something is wrong, is not subject to retribution, is not subject to demotion, is not afraid for his or her job but in fact is rewarded for their commitment to the people of this province. That goes for anyone, from a person working in a seniors' care home who talks about our frail and elderly, who reports cases of abuse, to the most senior mandarin in Queen's Park who can talk about government wrongdoing.

We have an opportunity to do something really great here, and I am asking the members of the government especially, when and if this goes to committee—I still haven't seen anyone indicate that it is, but I'm hoping it does—that we look very carefully at how to do that. If that is done, this will be a very proud day for Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Ramal: I was listening carefully to the member from Beaches—East York's speech in detail. I enjoyed listening to him. He always brings to this House a unique perspective and intelligent, thoughtful analysis.

As I mentioned, I listened to him describing his experience. It was a wonderful experience, and I want to thank him for sharing this experience with me, with all the people in this House and the many people who are listening to us tonight. It's important to engage the public employee in making decisions in the province of Ontario, because I believe they have a fundamental right to participate, to be a part of the political process, to have an opinion about who's going to be the government or participate to be part of the government; I think it's a fundamental right, and I agree with him strongly. His analysis and his descriptions of the bill were incredibly

good, and I believe he also has some kind of concern. I hope the bill goes to committee; I think it will go to committee and we'll get more debate and more opinions from different parties in order to enrich the bill and make it a very successful one.

I believe strongly that only by the democratic process, only by debating the issues, by understanding all the elements of any bill, can we reach a successful bill. Of course, all of us, from the Conservatives to the Liberals to the NDP, want to work and serve the people of Ontario. We want to bring our rules and laws to benefit them, to make their lives easier and more successful, and also to protect them. This is our job and our duty.

Certainly I and many of my colleagues here, and many people who are listening to us, enjoyed, I think and I hope, his analysis, his debate. I think he enriched the debate and gave it far more depth. I want to thank him. I wish all the people will support him too.

Mr. O'Toole: I'm pleased always to respond to the member from Beaches–East York and his comments on Bill 158. But I would have to say that his comments failed to meet the salient point of this evening's debate, which was really all about Bill 107. I know the discussion here is on—

The Deputy Speaker: No, no. The debate tonight was not on Bill 107. Your response should be directed to the remarks of the member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. O'Toole: Yes. Could I have the clock restored for the time, because I was responding. I was only trying to relate to the earlier part of the debate from the member from Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant, which—

The Deputy Speaker: No, no, the member for Durham, and I'd remind all members, questions and comments are to be directed to the comments made by the previous speaker, that being in this case the member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. O'Toole: I would seek unanimous consent to restore some of the time I'm limited to, because under Bill 158—I seek unanimous consent to extend the time remaining, because this is an act that revises aspects with respect to the Public Service Act. I would say that the member from Beaches–East York related, at the beginning of his comments, to his time in the public service. The right for the whistle-blower legislation is paramount. We would be clear on the record of our full and unequivocal support of that particular portion of the bill. But if you look in the bill itself and the number of acts it amends, you'd have to realize that if you relate it to the earlier part of the debate on Bill 107, it is related.

The Deputy Speaker: No.

Mr. O'Toole: No, I'm trying—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph–Wellington): I'm very pleased to respond to the remarks by the member from Beaches–East York. I found his dissertation on his tie choice fascinating. We often have private conversations about which tie he has chosen, so it's interesting that tonight, we actually have this on the record.

But on a more serious note, I would actually like to thank the member from Beaches–East York, who in fact is taking Bill 158 very seriously. This is actually quite a serious topic. We are updating the Public Service Act, to the benefit of those thousands, hundreds of thousands, tens of thousands, anyway, of people who work for the Ontario public service in the province of Ontario. We are updating the Public Service Act for the first time in very many years and bringing in things that have been significant holes. We are adjusting the act to allow for protection in the case where there is whistle-blowing. We are allowing the public service, for the first time in many years, to take part in political activity. We're dealing with clarifying conflict-of-interest rules. As the member has mentioned, we are dealing with the issue of bringing in successor rights. I would like to thank him very much for his positive comments in all of those areas and his very thoughtful discussion, as a former public servant, about how that can impact on people. In particular, I think this is a much more appropriate way, when we are discussing the working conditions of our own employees, to treat this discussion with respect, rather than ringing the bell for an hour, which I consider to be total disrespect for—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Questions and comments?

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Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): I'm pleased to respond to my colleague from Beaches–East York. I always enjoy his remarks. He, in fact, did something that is a bit of a rarity. He had the opportunity to use the entire hour for his comments but felt like he had—and had—made some excellent points in the 50 minutes or so that he used and left the 10 minutes on the clock. In those 50 minutes, the member brought forward some excellent suggestions with respect to the bill and some suggestions on how it could be improved at committee. I heard some members opposite say it may very well go to committee, which I'd encourage them to follow through with in their discussions with the House leader. The member also shared some of his retrospectives of his time in municipal office, working with civil servants both at the provincial and municipal levels and the importance of this legislation. Particularly the whistle-blower provisions took up a significant part of his comment.

I certainly hope that if this does go through committee, it won't get the same guillotine treatment we've seen of Bill 107, where the government cheerleaders were up first and then Mr. Lepofsky and some others who had some criticism to bring forward were unceremoniously cut off when it came to debate. So hopefully with Bill 158 we're not going to see that kind of guillotine brought forward. If this bill had been passed, we may have seen a different reaction at the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., for example, where some \$6 million, minimum, was used to—

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Erie–Lincoln, I didn't hear the member for Beaches–East York approach that subject. We must keep this to the comments made by the member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Hudak: Well, Mr. Speaker, with respect, the member spoke about the importance of whistle-blowers and making sure there are protections in place. So examples like those I referenced seem very appropriate because maybe that could have been stopped before \$6 million was wasted at the OLG.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Beaches–East York, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Prue: I'd like to thank the members for London–Fanshawe, Durham, Guelph–Wellington and Erie–Lincoln for their comments. To the member for London–Fanshawe, I thank you very much. You obviously took the time to listen to what I had to say tonight. That is not always what happens in here, but I thank you for your comments.

To the member for Durham, I don't want to digress; I wasn't talking about Bill 107. I know it's very dear to your heart, but that was not the subject at issue here tonight. That will be the subject, I'm sure, over the coming weeks and months as what has happened here I'm sure will be debated in the public.

To the member for Guelph–Wellington, thank you for your comments and thank you for your ongoing interest in my various ties and cravats.

To the member—

Mr. Hudak: What's the difference between a tie and a cravat?

Mr. Prue: I'll explain it to you. Okay. To the member for Erie–Lincoln, I thank you for your comments. Mr. Speaker, with all respect, when he digressed and talked about the lottery corporation, in fact, he was correct. I just want to state that for the record. Had there been public employees available to blow the whistle, this may not have gone into what has happened in the Legislature and in the press over the last couple of weeks. Had public employees known what was happening and been able to come forward without fear of reprisal, this might have been nipped in the bud a long time ago.

In the whole totality of this, I thank people for their comments. I am still asking and I have still yet to hear whether or not this will go to committee, because quite frankly, the people who are public employees in this province need to be heard and the unions that represent them need to be heard.

Mr. O'Toole: How about 107?

Mr. Prue: We will deal with 107 at some other appropriate time.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you to the member for Beaches–East York and all members. The member from Erie–Lincoln may have been right, but the comments weren't relevant to your comments.

With that, I will look at my pocket watch and say it is close to 9:30 of the clock. This House is adjourned until 10 of the clock, November 23.

The House adjourned at 2126.

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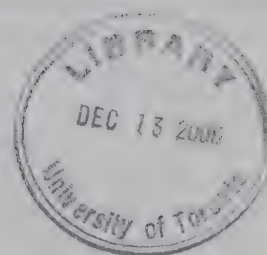
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No. 125

N° 125

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**Second Session, 38th Parliament**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**Deuxième session, 38^e législature**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)****Journal
des débats
(Hansard)****Thursday 23 November 2006****Jeudi 23 novembre 2006****Speaker**
Honourable Michael A. Brown**Président**
L'honorable Michael A. Brown**Clerk**
Claude L. DesRosiers**Greffier**
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 23 November 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 23 novembre 2006

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

LONG-TERM CARE SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should commit to a plan of action to invest in an effective capital renewal program for Ontario's 35,000 older long-term-care beds (structurally classified as B and C beds) so that they meet the 1998 design standards and so that all residents can have a home to live in with the comfort and dignity they deserve.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mrs. Witmer has moved private member's notice of motion number 27. Pursuant to standing order 96, Mrs. Witmer, you have up to 10 minutes.

Mrs. Witmer: This is an issue about which I feel very passionate. It is in response to the proposed new long-term-care homes legislation, Bill 140, in which the McGuinty government has failed in particular to address the needs of the 35,000 residents who currently live in older B and C homes. Not only does this bill fail to meet their accommodation needs, it actually places a cloud of uncertainty over the future of their homes.

Under the act's proposed limited licensing scheme, about half of the province's long-term-care homes will be given a licence that expires in 10 years, with no plan for what happens before or after. Indeed the legislation, after seven years, allows the government unilaterally to decide to do anything it wants, for whatever reason it wants, including closing the home or moving the beds to another community. In response to this, there is a call to action from those in this province who live in these homes and from their families and the staff. They feel like Ontario's forgotten people.

We have 35,000 residents who will now continue to call a three- or four-bed ward home, and there is no commitment, no plan at the current time from the government to begin the structural renewal of these homes. The lack of a plan or commitment to funding to begin the structural renewal of these older homes stands in stark contrast to the actions that were undertaken by our Progressive Conservative government beginning in 1997.

We introduced new design standards in 1998 and provided \$2.1 billion to build 20,000 new beds after no new beds had been constructed for 10 years. We also provided the money to rebuild 16,000 of our oldest beds, which were classified as D beds.

These new design standards that we introduced in 1998 responded to the needs of residents and their families. Indeed, we consulted with the residents in order to make sure that they would be able to live in dignity, safety and comfort, and when we consulted with them in 1997, they told us this: "We want to stop living our final years in a dormitory-style accommodation, the three- and four-bed wards." In fact, they said to us, "Even university students today have better accommodation than we do, as they live in private and semi-private rooms." They said they wanted to stop having to back their wheelchairs into the washroom. They wanted to stop sharing that washroom with at least eight other people. They said, "We can't even turn our chairs in a circle to reach the sink." They said they wanted to stop having to line up to catch the elevator to get to lunch or dinner and to do so a half-hour before mealtime, only to have to wait in the basement for another half-hour to get into the dining room.

We listened to these residents and their families. That's why we introduced the new design standards in 1998. That's why today 36,000 residents live in homes with 20,000 new beds and 16,000 of the D beds that were rebuilt to meet the new 1998 design standards. We had a plan. We made a financial commitment, and we worked in co-operation with the residents, the families and the people in the sector. Today these people enjoy private or semi-private bedrooms. They have ensuite washrooms with a turning circle to accommodate their wheelchairs. They have ensuite dining rooms, therapy and lounge rooms. In the dining rooms, they eat in areas where no more than 32 people gather, and they avoid the lineup and the elevator ride. They have fully twice the square footage of space per residence compared to older homes.

These people who do not today have the same quality of life and the same comfort, these other 35,000 people in the B and C homes, deserve the same quality of life. I am asking this government to step forward today and make that a commitment in order that these 35,000 people, some of our most frail and elderly, can appreciate the same quality of life that 36,000 other residents already do.

In fact, in this bill the government talks about creating more homelike environments where all residents can live in comfort and dignity, but that's not happening under this legislation, because they are ignoring the forgotten 35,000 residents who live in the older homes I have just

described, three- and four-bed wards with no ensuite bathroom. I believe that today these people deserve to live in a modern, new home. They deserve the physical home-like environment of the newly constructed homes that today meet the new 1998 design standards. These 35,000 people should not be treated like second-class citizens.

1010

In my own community, we have rebuilt Sunnyside Home. We have rebuilt Parkwood and Trinity Village Care Centre. We have upgraded these D homes to A homes, and the people are overjoyed. In fact, I would also remind this government that not only have we moved forward—and we began to do that in 1997 after consulting with residents' families and people in the sector—but most Canadian jurisdictions today have also recognized the need to treat all of these individuals fairly and they have eliminated or have plans to eliminate the four-beds-per-room arrangement in their long-term-care homes.

Regrettably, the Ontario government today has no plan nor has it made a financial commitment to replace our three- and four-beds-per-room arrangement where people live and sometimes share washrooms with eight other people and have to make that trek daily to the elevator, down to the basement, in order to line up for their food and sometimes be waiting half an hour ahead.

Well, I think this government needs to take action. I think the government also needs to remember that all the long-term-care residents in this province pay the same fees. However, as I have just pointed out today, about half of them, obviously, receive noticeably less value for their money than others.

The proposed licensing scheme and lack of an immediate commitment to funding to begin the structural renewal of older homes is bad system planning, because not only are these individuals, these 35,000 people, being deprived of a modern new home in which to live that would allow them additional space, more privacy, more comfort and an opportunity to live with dignity; it also disregards the fact if you look to the future, the number of seniors aged 75 and over will increase by 49% by 2016. Not only do we have to renovate and rebuild these older homes, but we need to look to a future where we build more homes.

So today I would urge all members of this Legislature—people that I know to be compassionate, caring individuals, people that I know have had visits from residents and family and staff—to allow all people in this province who live in our long-term homes to have the opportunity to live in homes that meet the 1998 design standards, to live in a home-like environment, in an environment where they can have small units of 32 residents at max, where they have in-area dining, lounge areas and therapy, where they only have one or two people per room and they have a washroom, and where the whole, entire room is wheelchair accessible. I urge you today to allow these people to live with comfort, privacy and dignity. I urge you to not let them be Ontario's forgotten.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): I'm pleased to have this opportunity to speak in support of this urgent and important resolution which has been brought forward by the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, who is our party's deputy leader. I want to commend the member at the outset for using her private member's ballot item opportunity to highlight this essential issue which all of us should care about. The member for Kitchener–Waterloo, as our party's health critic, has once again raised the bar for how we should use our private members' time.

It reminds me of her Bill 57, which was debated on October 29, 2004, which called for OHIP coverage for free immunizations for children, protecting them from chicken pox, pneumonia and meningitis. That resolution passed at second reading, and less than a month later the government responded in its first budget with a commitment to implement Mrs. Witmer's recommendation. She deserves enormous credit for initiating this idea in the Legislature and making it happen.

In the 16 years that I have been privileged to serve with the member for Kitchener–Waterloo in this Legislature, I've always shared her belief that care for our senior citizens must be amongst the provincial government's paramount concerns. Through these years, I've had occasion to visit many nursing homes in our area. For the most part, I've been very impressed with the caring and compassion which you immediately sense in so many of these homes, which speaks of the dedication and professionalism of the staff and management of such homes as Wellington Terrace in Centre Wellington, Royal Terrace in Palmerston, Chateau Gardens and Leisureworld in Elmira, Winston Park in Kitchener and the Nithview Community in New Hamburg, amongst many others.

During constituency week, while the Legislature was in recess—the week of November 6—I had the chance to meet with residents, families and staff of long-term-care homes in Waterloo–Wellington. We met at Chateau Gardens in Elmira on Friday, November 10. The people in attendance expressed to me their serious concerns about the McGuinty Liberal government's long-term-care policy. They talked about Bill 140 and complained about what is in the bill and what isn't in the bill. They gave me approximately 500 postcards, which I'm going to be sending over by page to the Minister of Health, calling on the provincial government to think about the 35,000 seniors who live in older nursing homes, many in crowded four-bed wards. I had a chance to see one of those wards for myself. While these residents have access to the same compassionate care which other residents receive, their rooms are so crowded you can barely turn around. Surely, these residents in these four-bed wards deserve better than this.

At the meeting at Chateau Gardens, I was asked to tell the government that they should move to establish an appropriate capital renewal program for older nursing homes, with mandatory time frames. They say that without this commitment, the promise of comfort and dignity

for all long-term-care residents rings hollow for the 35,000 residents in B and C homes. As their postcard concludes, these residents deserve a commitment and a plan now, not 10 years from now, and I could not agree more. This is exactly the substance of Mrs. Witmer's resolution that we're debating today.

I'm aware that other MPPs wish to speak to this motion, so I will now conclude, urging all members to support the member for Kitchener-Waterloo's resolution.

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this resolution today. I also would like to commend the former minister for not fearmongering as some of the associations have been fearmongering around Bill 140 and for keeping a civil tone in the debate today.

I do have to take exception to some of the things that she stated in her opening remarks to the resolution today. She noted that, in 1998, the Conservative government at that time had a plan for long-term care. I would dispute that, as did the Auditor General. In fact, the Provincial Auditor in 1995 and again in 2002 criticized the former Tory government for not having a plan. I'll quote: "Although it was aware of significant growth projected for the population age 65 and over, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care did not have a strategy for dealing with the anticipated increase in demand for long-term-care beds. We also noted that it did not have a systemic plan to determine where beds were most needed and to eliminate the wide variations in bed supply to make it equitable throughout the province." That's the auditor's report in 2002, long after their redevelopment plan had begun.

Mrs. Witmer also spoke of the preparation of design standards in 1997, having listened to the residents. In fact, I do believe that they did do a complete review of design standards, although I don't believe that they listened to the residents, because if they were complaining at that time—and that's some seven years ago, with actually six years left in their mandate—that they wanted to see three- and four-bed wards removed, why did the previous government not do it then?

They did do a redevelopment of the D beds; they did build some new beds. Unfortunately, they did not build them in the locations that were most needed across the province. They chose sites based on I'm not sure what particular information. However, we do find today that we have a situation where we have areas in the province with incredibly long waiting lists and areas in the province where we have over-bedding and in fact where we have occupancy rates of 50%. We have empty beds in a province where we have waiting lists in the hundreds in certain areas. That's due to the fact that the previous government had no plan and had no real strategy around the placement of new long-term-care beds across the province.

1020

During their term in office, with respect to long-term care, they also cut \$23.5 million from long-term-care

homes in 1996 and 1997. They announced a 15% co-pay increase in 2002—on Canada Day, to be exact—and began to implement that increase, which we have spent the last three years rolling back. They eliminated home care services, and in fact home care requirements soared across the province.

I know when I was knocking on doors in 2003, I met with some seniors who had just had their home care removed from them and were going to find themselves going into long-term-care homes because they could not do their own laundry. That's shocking.

I have to say that when I did my review for the long-term-care sector in 2003-04 and prepared my report called *Commitment to Care: A Plan for Long-Term Care in Ontario*, I heard from those seniors. I heard from seniors who told me that they wanted to age in place, that they did not want to go to long-term care unless it was absolutely essential.

We recognize that we will always have a need for long-term care in the province, and we recognize that it's a work in progress and that we have to continue to improve the quality of life of our seniors. What we've done through Bill 140 is the next step in that improvement and the next step in our planning stage for the long-term-care system across the province.

Mrs. Witmer spoke of the B and C beds across the province and spoke of the licensing scheme around those. In fact, there are not 35,000 C beds; there are about 25,000, and those have the 10-year licences where, in seven years, if not sooner, the ministry will undertake to meet with every one of those home operators to determine what, if anything, needs to be done for them to have a new licence issued to them. They will look at their track record; they will look at the needs in the community; they will look at the supports that are available in the community; and they will look at what structural changes may have to occur in order for all of our seniors across the province to live with the same level of dignity and respect, and that is our goal. For those in B beds, the term for their licence is 12 years, and the discussions will begin with them in nine years, if not sooner.

It will be 2017 before we see any alterations in the beds unless we undertake some kind of redevelopment program before that date, and that is not precluded from this legislation. What is in this legislation are standards to improve the quality of life for our front-line workers and for all of our residents.

Mrs. Witmer spoke of her consultation on the standards and the improvement to standards and building standards for these homes. I wonder if she spoke to front-line workers, because as I visited over 45 homes now across the province, one thing that I've heard from some of the workers in the new homes is their difficulty in providing the services that they need to provide, given the largeness of the homes and the amount of walking they have to do and the amount of distance they have to travel in order to serve the residents. I've also heard from the residents of these larger homes that they sometimes find it difficult to have interaction with other residents

because they're so far removed from them. So we want to look at those standards again and determine what is exactly the appropriate kind of living arrangement.

We have some fabulous homes across the province. I am not saying that some of the new builds aren't lovely and aren't providing a real quality of care. But we have to recognize, too, that the B and C homes are providing a quality of care. We have B and C homes across this province that have far longer waiting lists than some of the newer homes, and that's because of the reputation of those homes and the quality of care that's being provided by those front-line workers who truly care about the residents.

Over the last three years of our record here in government with respect to long-term care, we've introduced a lot of improvements to the long-term-care system. We've enshrined 24/7 RNs in our long-term-care homes, something that the previous government removed. We've also instituted two baths a week in our long-term-care homes, another standard that was removed by the previous government. We are promoting, through Bill 140, education and training for front-line workers, particularly with respect to dementia care and palliative care. We're promoting a holistic approach to the care of our residents, where it's a multi-dimensional approach to determining their care plan. We have, in fact, staffed our long-term-care homes. We've hired over 3,100 more front-line workers, including 682 nurses.

In our long-term-care legislation that we've proposed, we're promoting zero tolerance of abuse and neglect. We're ensuring that the rights of our residents are guaranteed in the legislation. We've made huge improvements to the accountability in long-term care by introducing unannounced annual inspections, whereas the previous government for some time during their mandate had no annual inspections and then went to annual inspections, but not unannounced. Ours are unannounced, so any day an inspector can arrive and see how the home is actually run on a day-to-day basis. We've introduced a number of new care plans for our front-line workers to deal with different problems our seniors are dealing with in our long-term-care homes.

We have invested a great deal, \$740 million more than previously invested, in long-term care. We have made strides in improving the quality of life for our residents. We've empowered our family members and our residents' councils in our long-term-care homes. We've funded the family council project, which has gone across the province, and ensured that we have the creation of family councils in our homes. We're trying to include community in our homes so that our seniors, in their final years, do not feel like they've been warehoused or left behind but are still a vital and integral part of our communities. We have encouraged our activity coordinators to share in their best practices, so that homes across the province will have the breadth of knowledge that some of our great activities coordinators do in some of our wonderful homes.

Moving back to this resolution with respect to the new builds and the investment, obviously we have an aging

population in the province. It would be ludicrous to believe that we would be closing homes across the province or losing beds. What we wanted to ensure through this legislation is that we have the planning tools to ensure that we have the beds in the right places across the province. I take great exception to certain stakeholder groups, in particular the long-term-care home providers on the private side, who have begun fearmongering and who are using our seniors in this way, instilling fear in them that their homes may be closed or that they may be moved at some point.

We have shown through our record a commitment to our seniors and a commitment to long-term care that is unprecedented in this province. We have shown that we are planning for the future, unlike the previous government, which was noted by the auditor in not one but two different reports. Our long-term-care legislation is in fact that: legislation that will govern long-term care. It brings three pieces of legislation under one piece of legislation that will ensure that our residents live in homes that have consistent standards which are consistently enforced by the Ministry of Health and that their rights are guaranteed, that they live with dignity and respect in homes that provide care to them in their final years.

This is so very important. These seniors are vulnerable. They deserve to live with dignity and respect. They deserve the care and compassion that those front-line workers are providing in every single one of our homes across the province. We as a government remain committed to ensuring that that care and compassion is there in those homes all across the province of Ontario.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean—Carleton): First, I want to congratulate my colleague Elizabeth Witmer from Kitchener—Waterloo for bringing this forward. Just by the simple fact of the matter that we have far more people on this side of the Legislature today to debate this important motion speaks for itself.

They talk about a revolution in long-term care, but the revolution started in 1998 with the member from Kitchener—Waterloo when she put 20,000 new beds into long-term care and injected about \$2.1 billion into long-term care. She was the one who provided the capital funding for those new beds that we're talking about today. She was the one who had the vision in 1998, eight years ago, to bring home-like settings to our long-term-care facilities.

I want to speak briefly because, Mr. Speaker, as you can imagine, this is a very important motion for my colleagues, and I know a lot of people want to speak it to. I first want to say that in the city of Ottawa we're short 850 long-term-care beds. We recognize in Ottawa that we need not only new beds but also some programs. So I wrote to the Premier in August, and I asked him for the province of Ontario to acknowledge and accept that there's a looming health care crisis in Ottawa with respect to no new long-term-care facilities, affordable retirement homes, home care and recreational facilities, and programs for our aging population, which will soon be reaching a critical level. Secondly, I requested that the

province put forward a plan that will begin to address this crisis in long-term-care facilities in the city of Ottawa.

Since I've been here in my short period of time, I've raised many times the fact that we've now got a term called "bed blocking" in the city of Ottawa, because all of the city's 28 long-term-care facilities have wait lists. Because of this, Ottawa's seniors are facing some of the province's longest wait times for beds in long-term-care facilities. I don't think that's appropriate. It's actually causing surgical delays in our hospitals.

I'm just hoping that the Liberals on the other side of the House, as few as they are, will stand up and support my colleague today in her visionary motion, one that she started in 1998. But after they took office, they decided to put the brakes on, to put the blocks on. I think it's important, because we've got 35,000 seniors across this province who are living in long-term-care beds that are meeting the design standards of 1972. Just to put that into perspective, that's two years older than me. So I'm encouraging members across the way in the other parties to support Mrs. Witmer's resolution today, because it's the right thing to do.

1030

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): I'm glad to add support to this motion on behalf of the New Democratic Party of Ontario. We believe that there are a few things that need to be said in regard to this particular debate. One of the key things is that if the government is to match what is being asked for, one of the things that needs to be said and put on the record is that we need to make sure we don't put the financial onus completely on the individual long-term-care facilities. We need to make sure that there is funding available through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to make sure that those particular upgrades are financed and do not put a burden on these homes. As we and the member well know, not-for-profit long-term-care facilities as well as the for-profit ones are currently having a bit of difficulty when it comes to funding. They're having to provide services with ever-increasing costs. Everything goes up with time: electricity costs, food costs, services, wages obviously. Everything is going up, and the funding is sometimes not keeping pace to the degree that it needs to.

In fact, all of us have been invited to long-term-care facilities in our ridings over pretty well most of this fall and part of the summer. I know I've had the opportunity to visit all the long-term-care facilities in my riding since the month of September. The common call on the part of administrators, workers, residents, residents' councils and family councils is basically the same: We need to get the government to commit to fulfilling the promise it made in the last election, which is to fund them by an additional \$6,000 per resident per year. That was a key promise made by the McGuinty Liberal Party in the last election. They promised that all long-term-care facilities would have their funding increased by \$6,000 per resident per year, and to date we're very much far short of fulfilling that promise. This government has less than 10 months to go until the next election. So unless the

government all of a sudden has a miraculous awakening and decides that it's going to keep that promise, it looks like we're going to have yet another broken promise on the part of the Liberal government.

I say it's an important issue. It is a promise that the Liberal government made while in opposition. It's one that they could deliver on if they chose to; so far, they've chosen not to. They've only met part of the commitment, and a very small part at that, and we need to make sure that they do so.

I want to speak specifically to what I've seen in long-term-care facilities as I've visited the various long-term-care facilities in the riding of Timmins–James Bay. First of all, with Extendicare: We have two for-profit Extendicare care nursing homes in my riding. One is in Kapuskasing and the other one is in Timmins. There is some really dedicated staff in those facilities, as there is in the not-for-profit ones. We've got some good management there, and I've had really good relationships with the management teams in both of those long-term-care facilities.

I visited their particular facilities, and they're really trying to do a heck of a lot with not much. It is very difficult for them to manage, as it is for not-for-profit homes; I'll talk about that in a minute. What happens is that the level of funding they get based on the case mix index, which provides their funding—just to explain to members who may not know, the funding of a long-term-care facility is very much tied to the level of care they provide to residents. Once a year, the ministry goes out and looks at how much care in that particular time the long-term-care facility is giving to individual residents within their facility and then ties the funding to that level of service, which is the adjustment of the case—

Interjections.

Mr. Bisson: I don't want to bother your conversation in any way. Is that okay?

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): It's fine with us.

Mr. Bisson: Thank you. I don't mind heckling and all that, but sometimes it's a little bit hard to think when you have a separate conversation that's very interesting and you want to listen to it. Anyway, sorry about that. I didn't mean to spot you out like that. I apologize to you, because that wasn't very nice.

Interjections.

Mr. Bisson: Well, it wasn't very nice of me, I've got to say.

I would just say that the case mix index is the mechanism by which we fund long-term-care facilities, and one of the complaints I'm hearing from all of the not-for-profit and for-profit nursing homes is that the case mix index, as calculated, very much does not meet the needs of those particular long-term-care facilities. So what ends up happening is that they find themselves with less money than they need to provide the level of service they want.

I had the opportunity to be at North Centennial Manor, a not-for-profit facility, I believe some time in October—again, great staff, the people work hard, the residents are

well taken care of. It's a beautiful facility. In fact, it was just rebuilt. There is a secured wing there that is probably one of the nicest secured wings I've seen in a long time. We can always get into a debate about secured wings and how many people really need to be there, but it's really a nice facility. But what struck me is that what I've seen at North Centennial Manor is the story across the system: There's not enough staff to go around. On this particular morning, there were two staff people who were doing baths, who were on bath duty, for all of the residents within the facility, including the secured wing. As you know, it takes a lot of time from those two staff people to do the baths. Then there is one nurse who basically works between the secured facility and the open facility. That's it: one nurse, one person to take care of both sides, and then another worker on the floor. So if the nurse is called to the other side to deal with an issue, there is only one staff person on the floor to take care of the residents, which is basically two hallways. So if you have a resident who is wandering down hallway A and the staff person is in hallway B, you're not going to see it.

I just looked at that and I thought to myself, "These are frail, elderly people, in this case people who are suffering from various forms of dementia, and we need to make sure we keep an eye on them." The staff is doing all they can. This is not a fault of staff or management. The issue is that there's not enough money to put two staff people on the floor at all times. So a lot of our long-term-care facilities are having to make do with less.

The other issue that really strikes me—this is a problem that's going to come back to bite us, and I hope it never gets to this—is that because of funding problems, we have a lot of part-time staff in our long-term-care facilities. At the North Centennial Manor, at the Golden Manor, at the Extendicare, at Foyer des Pionniers, it's the same story: They're having to hire staff on a part-time basis in order to staff up their facilities. There is some full-time staff—I don't want to say for a second that there isn't—but there are a lot of part-timers.

The issue is, everybody has to make a living, so they work part-time, let's say, at the Extendicare in Kapuskasing, and they work part-time at the North Centennial Manor in Kapuskasing or at the hospital. With regard to the flu pandemic issue, that's a huge problem. You could end up with a situation where a worker who works part-time at the hospital, let's say, in the morning, and then comes to the Extendicare or the North Centennial Manor in Kapuskasing in the afternoon, and if there is any kind of pandemic, staff themselves will be the cause of the problem of transferring the pandemic into other institutions.

I really worry about that. We know this is much more of a global village, and if there are going to be contagious diseases, it's much easier for contagious diseases to travel around the world, let alone go into large urban centres and back into communities like ours, because of the world being connected much more closely now because of transportation systems. So I just say that we need to look at how we're able to staff those units more

on a full-time basis so we don't end up having staff moving from one facility to another and, if there is a pandemic, in the end being part of the cause of transferring flu epidemics or whatever type of contagious disease from one unit to another.

Je voudrais parler un peu du Foyer des Pionniers à Hearst parce que ce qui se passe à Hearst est un problème dans la plupart de nos maisons pour aînés.

Quand le gouvernement a introduit le projet de loi sur le tabac et pour réduire la capacité du public de fumer dans les endroits publics, le fait que même si tu avais une place comme le Foyer des Pionniers, qui vient juste d'être bâti—je pense que c'était en 2004 ou 2003. M^{me} Smith était avec moi quand on a fait l'ouverture officielle. Ce qui est arrivé, c'est qu'avec les nouvelles réglementations, les salles de fumage dans ces institutions ne répondent pas à la nouvelle loi. On a bâti des institutions flambant neuves pour être capables d'avoir une salle de fumage pour les résidents sous les normes de 2003-2004, puis on a changé la loi. Un an après que l'institution ait été bâtie, on ne répondait plus aux normes. Ce qui arrive, c'est qu'on a des salles de fumage qui ne sont pas utilisées. Tu as des endroits dans le manoir qui sont vides.

1040

Il y a deux questions. Premièrement, ces résidents de 75 à 80 ans, s'ils fument encore, on ne va pas les arrêter. Écoutez, ce sont des adultes qui ont fumé toute leur vie. C'est leur choix. Je pense qu'on aurait dû regarder le projet de loi d'une manière de s'assurer que ceux qui restent dans les résidences de longue durée aient le droit de fumer dans leur résidence, dans la salle de fumage, spécialement dans les cas comme Kapuskasing et Hearst, qui, tous les deux, ont eu des manoirs flambant neufs en 2003 avec des salles de fumage. On aurait dû dire, au moins, « Écoutez. Ils rencontrent les normes assez proches de ce qu'on avait deux mois passés. Pourquoi changer le projet de loi et couper complètement le droit des résidents de fumer? » C'est un peu triste quand je rentre dans une résidence telle que Golden Manor à Timmins ou Foyer des Pionniers à Hearst et que je vois nos aînés qui ont besoin d'aller dehors pour fumer. Écoutez, c'est leur maison. À 75, 80, 90 ans, je pense qu'on a besoin de donner le respect à ce monde-là. S'ils décident de fumer, c'est leur choix. On a besoin de leur donner quelque chose dans le manoir pour être capables de fumer.

Moi, je suis contre le fumage. J'ai lâché de fumer, ça fait 40 livres et 15 ans passés, mais il faut respecter ces aînés-là. C'est du monde qui a des droits et qui a fait sa vie, et on a besoin de les respecter.

Sur la question du Foyer des Pionniers à la ville de Hearst, le maire, Roger Siguoin, et les conseillers comme M. Rhéaume et certainement le greffier, M. Claude Laflamme, ont repris le Foyer des Pionniers. C'est eux qui le gèrent à cette heure. Un des problèmes qu'ils regardent à cette heure, c'est qu'ils ont deux salles de fumage qui ne sont pas utilisées et ces deux salles de fumage-là pourraient facilement être converties en deux

chambres additionnelles dans le Foyer des Pionniers. Ils ont fait une demande au ministre de la Santé pour voir s'ils pourront étendre la capacité du Foyer des Pionniers pour y ajouter deux lits.

Je suis très reconnaissant de M. Smitherman; je le dis publiquement ici dans l'Assemblée. J'ai été lui parler à une couple d'occasions à ce sujet. Il n'a pas dit « oui » à ce point-ci parce que c'est un peu difficile. Il ne peut pas dire « oui » la première fois qu'on lui parle, mais il est très sympathique à la demande de la ville de Hearst d'ajouter au Foyer des Pionniers deux lits additionnels. On va continuer à travailler avec son bureau et avec le ministère de la Santé pour, espérons, additionner ces deux lits-là. Je veux remercier publiquement M. Smitherman pour avoir réagi si vite et d'une manière assez positive jusqu'à date. Encore, pour le record, je veux dire que ce n'est pas accepté. On ne peut pas dire que ça va être fait; on a besoin d'avoir l'approbation finale. Mais je sais que le ministre est sympathique. Espérons qu'à la fin de la journée on va être dans les plus brefs délais dans une situation d'être capables d'ajouter deux lits à Hearst et espérons que ça va revenir d'une manière positive. Je peux dire à ce point-ci que ça a l'air assez bien, ce que j'entends par les paroles du ministre.

The other thing I want to say in the last couple of minutes is the lack of long-term-care facilities on James Bay. You have communities like Moosonee, the only municipality on James Bay. There are no long-term-care beds in that community. People who are in need of long-term-care facilities end up having to go south to Timmins or Cochrane or Kapuskasing, far away from their families. I think most of us would accept that that is not acceptable. There is very little capacity for long-term care on Moose Factory Island itself, a little bit in Fort Albany and Attawapiskat, but absolutely none in places like Marten Falls and Kashechewan and Peawanuck. Hopefully, we're going to move forward on the hospital integration project that is basically going forward now, and again, Minister Smitherman—I say it publicly—has been very supportive of that initiative, has worked with the communities and with us, the James Bay General and the Weeneebayko hospital very collaboratively towards integration, and I want to thank him publicly for that. He has been a very good supporter of that project.

But one of the things that I'm looking forward to at the end of integration, when it finally comes to fruition, is to basically build wings of the hospital in each of our communities so that Moosonee not only has a couple—well, more than a couple—of acute care beds, but we're also able to put some long-term-care beds in the community of Moosonee. Those people need to have that. There's currently no hospital facility in that community. We only have, basically, a first-aid station or a clinic, as it's called. We look forward to integration bringing a reconstructed new hospital wing in Moosonee; there is one now in Fort Albany, but some ameliorations there, as well as Attawapiskat; and the same thing, a wing being built in Kashechewan. But as we do that, we need to

make sure that in the planning process we don't only look at acute care beds, we also long-term-care beds in those communities, so that we don't have to send community members from their communities on the James Bay coast, including Moosonee, all the way south so that they can get a bed in a long-term-care institution.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank you for having an opportunity in this debate.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member for Pembroke—for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): That's the one, Speaker.

I'm pleased to stand in support of my colleague's resolution this morning. Speaker, you'll recall that it was our party that rebuilt the D beds in this province when we were in government, yet this government has done nothing to deal with the issues surrounding B and C beds, a total of 35,000 beds. I believe it's 5,000 B and 30,000 C beds in this province. So this is why, of course, my colleague has brought forth this resolution.

One of the problems that my long-term-care people bring to my attention is that under the current provisions of the Bill 140, if passed, with the licensing provisions of Bill 140, they're simply not going to be in a position to upgrade those B and C beds because they're not going to be able to get the capital financing to do so with the licensing system that doesn't even ensure that they're going to have a facility beyond a certain date. That's one of the concerns: How is a financial institution going to allow them to invest if it may be jeopardizing its investment? Because that money can't be paid back if that facility isn't operating. This is one of the huge concerns. In fact, one of my long-term-care operators, one who has met with the member for Nipissing, said this is the “worst piece of legislation” she has ever seen in her entire life. That's a quote.

I want to talk about how this is all about politics. The member for Nipissing went around and did a report. I actually have to tell you that the response from my long-term-care people was quite positive about the report. However, what has happened here is they also characterize as a total betrayal on the part of the member for Nipissing in her capacity as the PA to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care that they have not attached any support to the regulations. They've given a whole lot of work to the long-term-care centres, but they haven't attached any funding.

If I could draw an analogy, it's sort of like if you took a hockey team—let's just take the Toronto Maple Leafs because I like them—and you gave them the six best hockey players in world: the best goalie and the five best skaters and forwards and defencemen in the world. Well, I put it to you that even though they're the best, it's unlikely they would win a single game, and they most certainly wouldn't win the Stanley Cup, because they don't have the resources to back up their plan. Five men on the ice at all times will be worn out and burned out, and that's exactly what this government wants to do to our long-term-care centre workers.

In fact, this bill is all about politics. It's all about wedging the hard-working people in our long-term-care centres against the multitude of people who do not live, work or have much direct involvement in a long-term-care centre. This is all about the government and the Minister of Health, Mr. Smitherman, saying, "We're the ones who are going to take care of your grandma and your grandpa, and we're going to make sure all those regulations are in place to make them better cared for and safer in a long-term-care centre." But if you don't attach any support, any financial resources to make that happen, in fact, the opposite is going to be true.

1050

I have already had, in the last few weeks, long-term-care centres in my riding lay off staff because they can't afford to keep them, yet they're being told they've got to do more and more and more. Just the work of filling out the report that the minister wants so they can justify their purported hiring of more nurses in long-term-care centres—it's a quarterly report, and I'm told by one operator that it requires 100 hours of their time every quarter to fill out that report. That's what I'm told.

So it's funny that it's always about the politics; it's always about trying to drive wedges between people; it's always about trying to create division within the population of the province of Ontario and the people who provide the services.

When I have a chance to visit these long-term-care centres, I've got to commend them on the great work they do. But they're being told, "You're going to have to do more and more and more," because it's politics, "but you're going to get less and less and less to do it." That is wrong.

This resolution should be supported. The government should rethink the politics of what they're doing. It's not always about drawing divisions between people. Sometimes you people over there have to think about doing the right thing.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): Let's just compare and contrast. I came into politics for one very simple reason: because we had elected governments that had played wedge politics, that deliberately went out of their way to say to people that some people count and some people don't count.

For me to hear from the other side that somehow we're playing wedge politics when we're doing something that's very simple but long overdue—what's long overdue is the fact that we need to have the new Bill 140, which I think has been widely praised by those in the industry as long overdue. But there are those who are afoot who think that somehow through that bill there should be a budgetary commitment. Anyone who knows this place knows that's not how this place works. I know that the former Minister of Health and Long-Term Care knows that as well.

I find it interesting, because I think perhaps today we are seeing a plank of the new Progressive Conservative Party budget, their plank about the financing. I find that there's a call here to fund some 35,000 beds to be

upgraded from B and C. I know that will be a pricey ticket, and I'll be interested in hearing in the spring, when Mr. Tory reveals his plan for the good people of Ontario, how many billions of dollars he attaches to the commitment. I know he has a great deal of respect for the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, and if she's calling for this, I would be surprised if the Leader of the Opposition didn't set a few billion dollars aside for it.

What I know is what's actually happening right now on the ground in my riding of Perth–Middlesex. I know that the previous government said there were going to be 20,000 new long-term-care beds. I know that none of them showed up in my riding during the eight years of the Harris-Eves government. And I know the good people in Knollcrest Lodge in Milverton, a wonderful home, which was a D facility, while providing superior care, wanted to upgrade their home. They qualified for something known as exceptional circumstances. But you want to know something? There was no money from the previous government for homes that qualified for exceptional circumstances. There was a program, but there was no money.

I'm glad to say that just last weekend I was part of the sod-turning at Knollcrest Lodge. The McGuinty government—our government—is providing some \$3.5 million to help that home redevelop to an A standard; we're providing some half a million dollars in transitional funding, but the remarkable story is the amount of money that the small community of Milverton, part of the great municipality of Perth East, has raised: some \$650,000, on track to a total of \$700,000. The reason they were able to do that is because this government actually provides money, in comparison—and I contrast—to the previous government, which did not provide that money.

When I was first elected, I said, "What did the former member say?" He said, "I can't get that money. I can't get the money. Nobody gets that money. We have a program, but there's no money."

I know that over the last few years, when I go to all of the nursing homes in my riding, they say thank you to me; they say thank you for the new equipment; they say thank you for more nurses; they say thank you to us for the types of things we've done. We've reversed the draconian move of the previous government in regard to the daily allowance for our seniors. All of those things cost money but, working together with the long-term homes, we've been able to make progress. I know that we announced just last month another 1,750 new beds to be built and 662 to be rebuilt. I would think it's odd for the member to come in with the record she has in government and say that somehow Bill 140 is some threat. I know politically there are people who are casting those aspersions, but I know that when I talk to residents and my care homes, they're very grateful. They know there's more to be done. I believe all of us in this House lobby the Minister of Finance for our own ridings.

I think there's a brighter future. I want to say to the B and C homes that if you're able to redevelop, because I know you all want to be As, then you're able to qualify

for a 25-year licence. I think that is an important incentive for us to move forward.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for your indulgence this morning.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I'm pleased to rise today in support of my colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo's resolution that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should commit to a plan of action to invest in an effective capital renewal program for Ontario's 35,000 older long-term-care beds (structurally classified as B and C beds) so that they meet the 1998 designs.

It's interesting that the member from Perth–Middlesex and the member from Nipissing aren't hearing what we're hearing on the ground from the long-term-care centres, the residents, the doctors and the staff in our ridings. I just can't believe they haven't received these cards—hundreds of them—from the Ontario Long Term Care Association, speaking about their concerns about Bill 140.

In my riding of Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, in the mid-1990s, it was a big problem, not enough long-term-care beds: years of waiting lists. The PC government came in and worked with the long-term-care associations and the municipalities, invested money, and we've got long-term-care beds. We have new beds. We have upgraded beds. All of a sudden, after the previous PC government did their investments, we didn't have waiting lists. The elderly and frail in my riding could access long-term-care beds.

Now, guess what? We've heard the demographics. The population of seniors is going up. We need more beds. I have wait-lists now again in my riding of Haliburton–Victoria–Brock.

The member from Nipissing did a good report. The government has not acted on this report. I guess it's not a shock to those people here. They bring in Bill 140. Residents of long-term-care centres come with wheelchairs or oxygen tanks, they bring in the doctors and staff and they come with all these cards and petitions. They have written letters to the townships. Bon-Air Nursing Home in Cannington wrote to Brock township, and Brock township sent back a letter saying, "We appreciate these concerns. They need to be acted on." There were nine recommendations that the Bon-Air long-term-care home brought forward.

The Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors are here today for a luncheon. Sandy Hall, the administrator of Victoria Manor in Lindsay, is here. They write—First Conclusion: "The bill"—140—"if implemented as drafted, will have serious implications for the viability of the not-for-profit ... long-term-care sector." We're not making this up. These people are coming to us and placing huge concerns in rural Ontario. Where could you move beds out of certain areas in rural Ontario and put them in other areas?

The level of uncertainty with Bill 140 is extremely high. We're talking about 300 long-term-care homes, 35,000 residents in the B and C homes. The staff give

tremendous care, and they're concerned that the patients in their B and C homes are not getting the same level of care, and they have no chance. As the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke said, "How they can go to the bank?" They can't go to the bank. Under Bill 140, there's not the surety. They can't upgrade their homes, build additions onto their homes the way they want to because they want to treat their residents on the same level playing field as everywhere else, and this bill discriminates against this.

My colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo has brought forward a resolution that all members of the Legislature should support.

1100

The Deputy Speaker: Mrs. Witmer, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Witmer: I want to thank the members from Waterloo–Wellington, Nepean–Carleton, Timmins–James Bay, Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and Haliburton–Victoria–Brock for supporting this motion. I also want to thank the members for Nipissing and Perth–Middlesex for speaking to the motion. However, I was certainly very surprised and very disappointed that the member from Nipissing and the member from Perth–Middlesex were so out of touch with what is going on in the province of Ontario.

We have 35,000 residents who are living in homes classified as B and C. They may be three- and four-bedroom wards; they may be sharing washrooms with eight people; or they may be travelling down to the basement and spending almost half an hour in transit for dining. They're not living in the modern facilities that we have today in the 20,000 new beds that have been constructed by our government or the 16,000 beds that we renovated.

I guess I would say, you promised a revolution. You promised that our senior citizens and others who live in these homes would live with dignity, would have privacy, would have safety, would have comfort, but you have not delivered. All you have done is create uncertainty. As a result, these individuals are coming to us with their petitions. They are pleading with us, "Do not let us be Ontario's forgotten people." Even university students today live in institutional settings that are better than this. These people receive excellent care. However, they don't have the opportunity to live in the new, modern facilities that others enjoy today. They don't deserve to be treated as second-class citizens. I plead, I beg with you today: Government, consider these individuals and support this resolution.

LAKE SIMCOE WATERSHED

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I move that, in the opinion of this House, the provincial government must:

Recognize that the county of Simcoe and the cities of Barrie and Orillia offer a superior environment and quality of life for families to live and work;

Recognize that Lake Simcoe has been an integral part of the heritage and culture of the region and that the lake generates approximately \$250 million per year in economic benefit;

Recognize the development pressures that the Oak Ridges moraine and greenbelt legislation and Places to Grow Act have placed on the Lake Simcoe watershed;

Recognize that the protection and improvement of water quality in Lake Simcoe must be a government priority;

Recognize that the intergovernmental action plan will require substantial provincial investment in infrastructure to accommodate the anticipated growth of approximately 250,000 citizens over the next 25 years;

Provide the means for adequate funding to accommodate the approved growth in the Lake Simcoe watershed;

Recognize the research and reports by various stakeholder groups that have worked tirelessly to promote the need for water quality protection and improvement of the Lake Simcoe watershed; and

Ensure that any future development must go hand in hand with comprehensive watershed planning and funded protection of the Lake Simcoe and Nottawasaga watersheds.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Dunlop has moved private members' notice of motion number 29. Mr. Dunlop, pursuant to standing order 96, you have up to 10 minutes.

Mr. Dunlop: I'm very pleased to rise today to present this resolution to the House, which I have referred to as the Lake Simcoe protection resolution. It follows Bill 106, a bill I introduced earlier in the year, that I had consultations on. However, I decided, because of the scope of the bill and the magnitude of the bill that would require, that it would be difficult to get that bill through the House, and I wanted to get, in this Parliament, some type of debate on the problems we have facing Lake Simcoe.

I believe this is the first time in the history of the Legislature that private members' time has been set aside to specifically deal with the protection of the water quality and what may be deemed one of the most beautiful bodies of water in our planet, Lake Simcoe. After the Great Lakes, the second-largest lake in Ontario is Lake Simcoe, after, of course, Lake Nipigon.

I have been told by folks representing the chambers of commerce that the economic benefit generated by Lake Simcoe is somewhere around \$250 million per year. I also understand that currently on our planet, close to one billion people do not have access to good, clean drinking water. We have an abundance of water here in this province and I'm one who believes we really have to do more to protect it.

I have been involved in municipal politics since 1980, and in that period I have witnessed growing concern about the quality of water in Lake Simcoe on the part of politicians and residents alike. In fact, I chaired the official plan committee of the county of Simcoe and felt

that even then our shoreline development issues were very controversial and certainly drew the attention of the public.

Since 1999, however, I've found that far more attention has been paid to the lake by my constituents, and I see it on a regular basis.

Anyone 40 years of age or older who's a resident of Simcoe county can certainly recall Lake Simcoe being identified as the ice-fishing whitefish capital of North America. I remember, as a little boy, my father coming home from ice fishing and bringing the beautiful whitefish of Lake Simcoe back to our home. Unfortunately, those days are gone.

Currently, the population of the county of Simcoe and the cities of Barrie and Orillia is 420,000. At the current population, some will argue that the quality of the water, with improvements that have been made to date—sewage systems and some stormwater protection—is maintaining itself or even slightly improving. However, many others will argue that the water quality is deteriorating, particularly along the shoreline areas.

There's no question that popular legislation introduced and passed in this House, such as the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, the Greenbelt Act and the Places to Grow Act, has created a fast-tracking or leap-frogging effect of development to Simcoe county and specifically to south Simcoe.

I should point out that this has happened in other areas of the province as well, where the greenbelt area has ended and the other areas go up for massive development. Clearly, in Ontario our homebuilders need access to land to accommodate the population growth that we're seeing.

The current government's plan to look at population trends in the region was to create a process, specific to the county of Simcoe and Barrie and Orillia, called the intergovernmental action plan. Included in the process were the members of council from the municipalities and the mayors etc. but not any of the sitting MPPs, such as myself or Mr. Tascona or Mr. Wilson.

The results released to the councils on August 14 of this year at the AMO conference in Ottawa called for a Barrie and area option as the preferred growth plan for the next 25 years. I had asked to be invited to that meeting, as the MPP for Simcoe North—there are 100 kilometres of shoreline in my riding—and my request was never even responded to by Minister Gerretsen's office. That meeting was also attended by the Minister of the Environment.

Many problems exist with the IGAP, which will add a minimum of 250,000 additional people to the county of Simcoe and the cities of Barrie and Orillia over the next 25 years. That's a 60% population growth.

Let me give you some examples. The IGAP did not include a strategy for job creation and economic growth. The IGAP did not include a strategy for infrastructure construction and expansion. The IGAP did not include an environmental strategy.

What jumped out at me and is paramount to this resolution is that the Barrie and area option presented at

the August 14 meeting showed one main disadvantage: It clearly points out that the plan exceeds the assimilative capacity targets of Lake Simcoe.

On page 14 of the presentation that the minister presented to the mayors of the counties of Simcoe—Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats—it said, “Finite capacity for growth in Lake Simcoe and Nottawasaga river watersheds.”

On page 22, under “Barrie and Area Option,” the main disadvantage was: “Exceeds assimilative capacity study targets.” Ms. Munro already brought that up in this House at one point.

The government gave the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority and the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority, I believe, something like \$1.5 million to do the appropriate studies to go back to the IGAP. But what happened? They were not even invited; none of their information was listened to.

Even if the lake is maintaining itself now—and I say again, many people argue that it's not—what type of condition will it be in by the year 2031 if we follow this Barrie and area option plan?

Even the IGAP identified that in 2006 dollars, approximately \$650 million will be required for sewer and water systems to accommodate the growth. This is very interesting to note, since in the last round of the COMRIF funding, not one cent was allocated for sewer and water purposes to the county of Simcoe or to any municipality in the county of Simcoe or to Barrie and Orillia.

1110

Lake Simcoe is crying out for help. Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority cannot possibly adjust to this growth without substantial provincial investments and involvement.

Many interested groups are also raising awareness—I'm telling you, we hear about them on a daily basis—organizations like Campaign Lake Simcoe, the Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition, the Ladies of the Lake. The Ladies of the Lake raised \$250,000 selling this calendar this year just for the purpose of drawing attention to this problem. Marina operators, conservation clubs, hunters' and anglers' groups, cottager associations and municipalities have all raised the flag to point out that we absolutely have to do better and we have to do more. The province has to be more attentive, more compassionate, and clearly has to play more of an active role if we are to protect and enhance this beautiful body of water for generations to come.

I personally believe there's even another aspect to this, and that's the federal government. I know the federal government may be able to play a role in this. I know that environmental hot spots have been identified by the International Joint Commission on the Great Lakes. I think there is an argument that can be put forward that Lake Simcoe could be identified as an environmental hot spot. It is the sixth Great Lake. But with or without any federal assistance, we in this assembly cannot allow this beautiful lake, Lake Simcoe, to continue to deteriorate.

The county of Simcoe municipalities and the cities of Barrie and Orillia have just this past week elected their

municipal councils for the next four years. I congratulate all of those who put their name on the ballot and congratulate the winners as well. The challenges they face are monumental. I believe, without question, that one of the top priorities will be growth and finding the infrastructure dollars to accommodate the growth. As we add another 250,000 people to the region over the next 25 years, we need to see substantial provincial funding for things such as sewer and water expansions and improvements; storm and surface water improvements; expansion of hospitals; more long-term-care beds; innovative methods of waste disposal; Highway 400—we simply cannot keep adding thousands and thousands of cars on to that highway every day, as it's nothing but a massive gridlock problem; and, finally, a comprehensive government plan that will protect and enhance Lake Simcoe and the watersheds of Lake Simcoe and the Nottawasaga River; a plan based on environmental science; a plan that would see consistent development policies in all municipalities surrounding the lake.

I can tell you that in my riding alone, there are over 100 kilometres of shoreline on Lake Simcoe, and only a few miles of that actually have any sewer and water capacity. So we have these thousands of cottages—some of these are mega-homes now—and they are all on tile beds. Some go half a mile back from the water. But you know what? They all flow towards the water, as they seep towards the lake, and that's getting to the lake. We need to do more around some of our municipal drains, and we have to do more with storm water management.

The reality is that we do not want to continue on with this massive development unless we have a comprehensive plan in place that will protect that lake. It's our responsibility in this House to do just that. I would urge all members of the House—I know there are not a lot of government members here this morning—I would ask to you to please listen to these comments. This is a very, very important issue for a beautiful part of the province. We do not want to see this gem in the province of Ontario deteriorate any further. We want to enhance it even more, to protect it, to make more economic development, and to make it better for our children, our grandchildren and many generations to come. It's that important. I plead with you all to support this resolution this morning.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): Thank you for giving me the chance to speak on the resolution brought by the member from Simcoe North. It's a very important issue we're dealing with today. It's to protect our natural resources, our beautiful areas in the province of Ontario.

I had the chance a couple years ago to go to Lake Simcoe to see the beautiful landscape of the area. I also had the chance to go to Barrie and Orillia with the member from Simcoe-Grey and the member from Barrie. Because we had an event going on in the area, I went early to see the area. It was beautiful. When you go, you see little hills and the landscape. It's a very beautiful

area. I know that many people in the province go to Lake Simcoe, especially in the wintertime, for fishing. It's a very important tourist attraction for many people.

This resolution fits with our government line. We believe strongly in protecting natural areas and farming areas, and we invested by creating the greenbelt area. We invested, in the beginning, when we got elected, to protect 1.8 million acres in the Golden Horseshoe area, which was famous, through the greenbelt plan. It's very important to us to protect the natural resources, especially water.

No doubt about it: The member from Simcoe North brings to the House a very important issue: to create awareness among us in this place and also to send a message to the people of Ontario about the importance of the natural resources, of the watershed, of an area that attracts many people to visit and enjoy themselves during their vacation time. He also mentioned protection of the water. I had the privilege to be part of the committee that was in charge of touring the province of Ontario to introduce Bill 43, the water protection act, a very important bill. We toured the province, especially rural areas, to make sure that all the streams, the rivers, the lakes, all the sources of water were protected, because it's vitally important to us to make sure that the water we drink in the cities and the urban centres are well protected to maintain the safety of the people of this beautiful province.

There's no doubt about it: The member for Simcoe North brings an important issue about Lake Simcoe. It's an attraction for many people. It's also the watershed for many different sources of water that feed many different locations and municipalities. By protecting the area, it protects our lives, our future, and maintains safe drinking water for many people who live around it. He's also bringing the very important issue that when we grow in the city of Toronto and many different areas, we have to send people outside Toronto; people like to live outside Toronto. It happens that the Simcoe North area is the area nearest to Toronto, and many people like to live there and commute on a daily basis between there and Toronto.

So we have to invest more money in infrastructure, which we do. We created a program we called ReNew Ontario which will invest about \$30 billion over the next five years to make sure that the infrastructure and water systems are in place. He brought a very important issue. I had the chance to go to the Lake Huron area. There are a lot of cottages in that area. I see a lot of houses on a little hill there facing the water. There's a big concern about the sewer system not being in place and the municipal infrastructure not being in place. It's very important to protect the water sources and watersheds and the lakes that feed a lot of water sources.

There's no doubt about it: He brings a very important resolution. I'm going to support it because it means a lot to us, especially on this side of the House. Protecting natural resources and the greenbelt and the water, the infrastructure, means a lot because it means building the infrastructure for generations to come. We want to make

sure that all areas of the province of Ontario are well looked after and all the infrastructure is in place. That's important, because we cannot build one element without building the infrastructure to continue building prosperous communities, whether in urban centres or rural areas. For our government, it is an important element; they all work together to create a great and prosperous province.

In the end, I'm going to support this resolution because it fits our agenda, fits our direction. I think it's an important resolution to continue to talk about protection for natural resources and for green areas, especially source water.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member for Waterloo—

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Speaker, and I'd ask that the clock be stopped while my point of order is going on.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. We'll stop the clock.

Mr. Levac: There's a long-standing tradition in this place. Twice today I've heard references to people's attendance, and I would draw to the attention of this place and the House that there are circumstances for that. Because of the long-standing tradition, we've been very good at not mentioning attendance in this place. There have been three unfortunate deaths in our caucus and there have been some illnesses and some operations. I would reference this to all members, to please be cognizant of not making references to people's attendance.

The Deputy Speaker: Just to clarify your point of order, I heard those, and there has been no reference to a particular member's absence. There has been a reference to the overall attendance. All parties should take care to note that.

The member for Waterloo—Wellington.

1120

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo—Wellington): The member for Simcoe North is representing the long-term interests of his constituents by bringing forward this resolution today. So often politicians are accused of having a planning horizon that extends no farther than the next election, and it is said that we don't attend to the needs of future generations. Garfield Dunlop makes it abundantly clear that he does care about future generations with what he's doing in this House today.

As the MPP for Waterloo—Wellington, I understand his concern perhaps better than some. Much of our riding touches upon the greater Toronto area as well. The government's greenbelt policy is intended to dramatically restrict growth, generally speaking, in a concentric circle outside of the city of Toronto. The greenbelt is a defined geographic area enveloping Lake Ontario from Northumberland to Niagara. As my colleague the member for Erie—Lincoln has said many times, the greenbelt owes its boundary origins more to political science than natural science.

Although the principle of a greenbelt is very popular, when the policy was announced, my immediate concern was that it might have the effect of pushing enormous

growth pressure to the communities just outside of it, in areas like Simcoe county and Wellington county. My own view on growth is this: Communities should be allowed and be able to decide their own futures. I've always believed in local autonomy when it comes to decisions about growth. Local municipal councils have a mandate from their residents to do their own planning and should be allowed to pursue their plans without excessive and undue interference from the province. As a general rule, unless there is some significant provincial interest, local autonomy on planning should be respected by the provincial government. If a community wants to grow, providing environmental issues are not found to be of significant concern, it should be allowed to do so. On the other hand, if a municipality wishes to maintain its population and preserve the status quo by restricting growth, it should be allowed to make that decision as well.

I know that the member for Simcoe North is very concerned about the quality of water in Lake Simcoe. I know that he would agree that scientific study must be ongoing to ensure its long-term survival, and if excessive growth is damaging the lake, then action must be taken.

Let's return to consider the case of Wellington county once again. Here we see that the government's Places to Grow initiative anticipates that the combined population of the county of Wellington and the city of Guelph will increase from 195,000 in 2001 to 321,000 by 2031. That's an increase of 126,000 people. That's a 65% increase over 30 years in communities which draw their water from the ground, the vast majority of which lack any form of public transit and are served by a county and separated city form of local government. I'm hearing concerns expressed to me that this level of growth is too high. I understand from a briefing that I had last week with officials from the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal that these growth forecasts will be reviewed every five years in conjunction with the release of new census data, and the growth plan forecasts may be amended in the future. In fact, I'm told that new census data will be available to the government as early as next year. I hope that going forward the government will consult with municipalities on the growth target numbers, more so than they have to date.

The other concern, of course, is: Will there be sufficient infrastructure to support the growth the government envisions, and if so, who will pay?

In closing, I want to ask all members to seriously consider the points the member for Simcoe North is making today and urge every member of the House to think of the coming generations when they cast their vote on this important resolution.

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm very pleased to join my colleague from Simcoe North on this bill. Certainly the resolution is very clear. It says, "Recognize that the county of Simcoe and the cities of Barrie and Orillia offer a superior environment and quality of life for families to live and work." That is so true.

Last night I was at the Southshore Community Centre, which is on Kempenfelt Bay, which, when I was on council, was purchased by the city of Barrie council for the residents of Barrie, that whole section from the Tiffin boat launch down to Minet's Point. It was slated to have houses built on it by CN and we stopped that through an expropriation motion.

Last night I was at the retirement party for Peter Lee, who is leaving the city after 18 years as CAO, and also 36 years' service with the community. His focus, my focus, I think all my colleagues' focus who really feel strongly about Lake Simcoe, is that it has to be protected without question, and it has to be protected in measures that require funding and support from the provincial government to make sure that this lake continues to sustain itself.

There are measures, and my colleague Julia Munro will speak about it, in Bradford. There's a plan, a project, down there that would help deal with phosphorus coming into Lake Simcoe down in that region, which the town has worked on with the other communities to make sure that happens. It's about a \$16-million project, but it's something that could benefit the lake. We need the money from the province to make sure that we get that funding and that type of operation in to protect the lake even more. That's been a project in the works for a number of years. Certainly, anything we can do to make Lake Simcoe maintain its quality of water, to make sure that the pressures of growth do not impact is good.

There has to be a firm plan in terms of how much growth there can be before the lake is impacted. Quite frankly, that work hasn't been done by the government. They've turned their backs on the residents of Simcoe county; they've turned their backs on all the environmentalists who believe in Lake Simcoe and believe in quality of water in this province. It's a shame, because the environment is so important. For them to turn their backs on Lake Simcoe just isn't acceptable.

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): It's a pleasure to rise to speak to this resolution brought forward by my colleague opposite. I speak a bit nostalgically at first, as many people do about that area. When I was quite a bit younger and my husband and I were courting, we used to leave the big city and drive up north to a destination—Lake Simcoe—so that we could enjoy the natural beauty up there, the pastoral quality of the area. Gee, if things had been different, we might have actually settled down there. Maybe we would have met head to head in an election or something. However, that didn't work out. We're both in the House, happily, together, my area being Stoney Creek.

I understand very much about the issues that he's talked about in terms of preservation of the natural aspects of that area, but also of any area. Those concerns have been embodied in many pieces of legislation put forward by this government. One of the reasons why I ran for the Liberal Party in the last election was because of its understanding and its concern around the environment. The Clean Water Act, which we just recently

passed in this Legislature, was not supported by the other side. I'm not sure why. The greenbelt legislation was not overly supported by the other side. However, that is a piece of legislation that—I think even the member who is bringing forth this resolution was maybe supportive of having his area included in the greenbelt, because that might have addressed some of the issues that he's concerned about here, which are to preserve this area, to protect the watershed and to protect the environment. Because let's face it: If we don't have clean water and we don't have clean air and we don't learn how to grow sustainably, we're not going to be around at all. These are issues that our government understands very, very well and have been embodied in pieces of legislation that we've brought forward—the two I've mentioned, but also Places to Grow.

I'm going to speak about my area, because in Stoney Creek—my area is included in the greenbelt. There was a lot of discussion around whether or not this was a good thing or a bad thing, development and how it should go forward. The area that I represent, lower Stoney Creek, was an area that had been brought into the urban boundary twice previously. The greenbelt proposed to freeze it because that was where some of the world's best tender fruit land exists. However, that's not the case anymore. Because it has been patchwork-paved over with industry, with subdivisions, with highways, with railways, we have actually destroyed the microclimate in our tender fruit land because we've created frost pockets with these pieces of development. Tragically, our greenbelt legislation is actually too late for that pocket, that rare piece of land in the world. It was too late for that area. So in fact, as much as I believed in green, I had to fight to have that portion removed from the greenbelt. But I fought very hard to keep in the pieces that made sense, that we really could still preserve. So there's a chunk of good tender fruit land that I knew we could keep.

There was another piece of land right on the shores of Lake Ontario which had not been included in the draft legislation for the greenbelt. It's a wetland where birds nest. The federal government actually owns the property—the Department of National Defence—but it doesn't get used, so it just sits there. It's actually a nesting ground for water birds. I pointed this out to the drafters of the greenbelt. I said, "You know, you've got all this great greenbelt land in here. Some of it doesn't make that much sense, unfortunately, because we human beings managed to destroy that great land that we had there. But here's a lovely little piece of land that I think we should preserve—hopefully forever, which was the intent of the greenbelt legislation—and then we will have a natural park right on Lake Ontario for the wildlife to enjoy and for people to enjoy." We need our green space, we need our clean water, and we do understand that.

I'm not entirely clear, when I was listening to the member opposite, whether he's for development or against development, whether he wants urban sprawl or doesn't want urban sprawl. I'm not quite clear. But I can certainly support his sentiment and his concerns and say,

"Yes, we want to work with you, with the people of this area, to make sure that if growth continues, it happens in a responsible way, in a sustainable way, and that that jewel of a lake called Lake Simcoe is protected as best as possible." I don't have any difficulty in supporting that notion, that sentiment and that resolution.

I just hope that as we continue to work on plans that we have for the province for preserving our green space, for keeping our water clean and our air clean, we develop plans that don't just look to the next election or the next 10 years or the next development plan but actually look out 30, 40, 50, 100 years at what we need to do to grow sustainably now, so that all these wonderful things will still be there for future generations, not just our kids but their kids and so on. That's what it's all about: stewardship. We don't really own anything; we do not own any land here. We are here to look after it. We are its stewards. At best, we rent it, and we should be thankful for it and do the best we can, potentially through resolutions like this; definitely through many of the pieces of legislation that our government has introduced and passed in this House.

So I will support the member opposite in this, and I look forward to working very closely with him in the future to make sure that that jewel of a lake, Lake Simcoe, will still be there in its beauty and its glory so that my husband and I can take our kids and grandkids there to enjoy it.

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): I'm pleased to be able to join and add a few comments to what I believe is an extremely important initiative taken on by the member, Mr. Dunlop.

I live only a couple of miles from the lake, in the town of Georgina, and I can assure all members that my constituents want to preserve Lake Simcoe, both for its recreation and as a source of drinking water. To do this requires protecting the rivers and streams that flow into the lake. Along with many other local residents, I've rolled up my sleeves and helped clean up some of our local water courses, such as the Black River and the East Holland River.

As a property owner in Georgina, I joined an initiative led by the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority to plant trees in sensitive areas on a cost-share basis. In my case, they planted 230 trees and shrubs. Planting trees in sensitive areas helps to prevent a quick runoff of melting snow in the spring. Slowing down the runoff prevents erosion and protects wildlife habitat along water courses. Erosion is a huge issue when it comes to preserving water quality, and the more we can prevent erosion, the more we can do to keep our lake water clean. I'd encourage all eligible landowners in the Lake Simcoe watershed to take advantage of a program such as this and to contact the conservation authority to see if you qualify.

When our PC government was in office, we embarked on a number of initiatives which benefited Lake Simcoe. Protecting the Oak Ridges moraine helps preserve the southern portion of the Lake Simcoe watershed. One of

the key initiatives in this process was recognizing the importance of protecting cold water streams emptying into Lake Simcoe. We need to continue this work, as the way to preserve the lake is to preserve each stream along its entire course. This is where individual citizens can do their part.

Finally, I want to thank all of those who have worked to bring this resolution to debate in the Legislature, starting with my colleague the member from Simcoe North. The Ladies of the Lake, Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition and the conservation authority, to name only three, have worked very hard on behalf of the lake.

Most importantly, I want to thank the hundreds and thousands of local residents who do their part every day to help preserve the lake. We must all work together to preserve the lake we love, and I'm proud to state my personal commitment to preserving Lake Simcoe for all of our children and future generations.

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I do want to congratulate my colleague for Simcoe North, Mr. Dunlop, for bringing this historic resolution into the House. As he said, I think it's the first time that we've debated the Lake Simcoe and Nottawasaga River watersheds in this House and exclusively set aside time for it. It's very important.

In a nutshell, in the couple minutes I have, I just want to say that while the greenbelt was a very popular and good idea, I don't think it was totally thought out. The greenbelt created a leapfrog effect with respect to development of Simcoe county. People can't develop where they wanted to develop around Toronto, so they have to develop—and the demand certainly is there for new housing—in Simcoe county, particularly the south end of the county.

But as Mr. Dunlop pointed out, none of the municipalities in the county of Simcoe, including Barrie and Orillia, got any money under COMRIF for sewer and water projects from this government. That's a shame. Under our government, for example, the little village of Creemore in my riding needed a sewage system. We did that and put in the most modern technology, ZENON technology. You can literally drink the water coming out of that sewage treatment plant that goes into one of the little creeks behind the plant.

We need, as was pointed out, that modern technology all around Lake Simcoe. We need a huge investment—the IGAP report said \$650 million, but it's much more than that—in sewer and water because the home builders need access to land that is serviced with the most modern technology.

People are going to want to live in beautiful Simcoe county. The government's own consultant report, IGAP, the intergovernmental action plan, indicates another 250,000 people over the next 25 years. That's like adding a bunch of Clearviews every year for the next 25 years. It's like adding about half the population of New Tecumseth every 25 years. So it's a huge impact on our area.

All I would do is join in the plea this morning that the government, while it did the greenbelt—that's one

thing—has got to follow that up with infrastructure dollars so that we can accommodate the people who want to live there. We want to have a beautiful Simcoe county. We want to maintain beautiful Lake Simcoe and the Nottawasaga River, but we won't be able to do that without modern equipment, modern investment and a real, long-term commitment from all governments so that we can keep Simcoe county a place where people want to live, work and raise their family.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): I also want to rise in support of my friend the member from Simcoe North. I want to tell you why I'm going to support the bill. When I was busy on our all-party standing committee reviewing the Clean Water Act—something, I might add, the members opposite voted against—we were in Walkerton and then we had to fly to Cornwall. On that flight, we flew over Lake Simcoe. I can tell you, if you fly over Lake Simcoe, you have a different view of the world, you have a different perspective about that amazing jewel. I want to say to my friend opposite that I think his resolution is very well intended and I look forward to supporting that.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): I'm pleased to rise today and to commend my colleague from Simcoe North for bringing forward this resolution to protect Lake Simcoe.

I'm in support of the resolution, and I want to remind the people who are watching and the few people on the other side that the shores of Lake Simcoe reach the Brock township part of Haliburton-Victoria-Brock. So there is a connection. I have a lot of e-mails; a lot of constituents in my riding are concerned about protecting Lake Simcoe. I support the intentions of my colleague from Simcoe North, and obviously many, many groups and individuals do. We're hoping that all members of this Legislature are going to.

1140

I'll quote one letter that came in to us. "Mr. Dunlop says protecting Lake Simcoe should not be a partisan issue, and I agree. We have to start listening to people, like Mr. Dunlop, who live by threatened water bodies instead of playing politics with this vital resource...."

"Mr. Dunlop lives around Lake Simcoe and knows first-hand how important it is to protect the largest freshwater lake entirely within Ontario. He knows that thousands receive drinking water from it, that the Lake Simcoe area's tourism industry is worth hundreds of millions of dollars and that the area's 2,000 farms shouldn't be paved over. He also knows there are plans to put 140,000 more people on green spaces in Simcoe county alone, and that there are better ways to grow than paving more wetlands, forests and working farms."

That's the content of many, many e-mails and letters that I've received.

I agree with that, and I agree with the member for Simcoe North and the leadership role he has shown with this. It's unfortunate that the McGuinty government does not have a better plan, has not been working with the area here in Lake Simcoe that we're speaking about today. It

has forced the local environmental groups, the conservation authority and the member for Simcoe North to take on the role the government should have been playing. He has built on the momentum. He has talked about the Ladies of the Lake, how they fundraise, how their great calendar raised dollars to help protect, for everyone's good—I mean, we're all in the province of Ontario; we all want to protect these natural resources.

The member for Simcoe North has mentioned the frustration in dealing with the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Municipal Affairs on this matter. Lake Simcoe is an integral part of the fabric, the culture, the heritage, the environmental landscape and the areas that surround it.

This huge growth that my colleagues from Simcoe have mentioned—they take in more than Lake Simcoe, but the huge growth that is expected—there's no plan, there's no up-to-date infrastructure that is needed to protect the watershed areas: the Nottawasaga watershed area and the Lake Simcoe watershed area.

We need to support this resolution here today, and I'm hoping the members in the government will vote in favour of this and we can move forward to protect Lake Simcoe.

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh): I'm delighted to have a few moments to speak on this resolution before us this morning from the member for Simcoe North.

I read with interest all the key messages from this resolution, but I was particularly drawn to a few key lines from it, wondering why the lines were in the resolution at all. For example, I read, "Recognize that the protection and improvement of water quality in Lake Simcoe must be a government priority."

Water quality for all Ontarians is a priority, and that is why we brought in the clean water legislation. As said, this act will better protect the quality and quantity of water—we've said that before; I say it again—and the aquifers, rivers and lakes for all Ontarians will be protected, not just the folks living in the Lake Simcoe region, but including them as well.

I also read, "Recognize that the intergovernmental action plan will require substantial provincial investment in infrastructure to accommodate the anticipated growth of approximately 250,000 citizens over the next 25 years."

This intergovernmental action plan has partnered with Simcoe-area municipalities to address the serious watershed and growth issues. This plan is a study, not an outcome or a government policy, and certainly we are going to work with the municipalities in that area, in the member's riding, and address those over the coming years.

With the government spending \$2.25 million to complete the intergovernmental action plan and a further three quarters of a million dollars from the municipal partners, it's surely an indication of our commitment to Lake Simcoe and Simcoe county municipalities, and certainly we are interested in environmental protection,

development certainty and effective and sustainable governance.

My time has run out, but I'm delighted to have had this opportunity to speak.

Mr. Dunlop: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I just want to get clarification. I understand the third party is not here to do their time. Can I have unanimous consent for anyone else here to speak?

The Deputy Speaker: It's rather unique—you can take your seat if you like. Since there aren't any members here who could ask for unanimous consent to give up their own time, I don't think it's appropriate that the rest of the members can give away someone else's time. The bottom line is, no.

Mr. Dunlop: Further, then, on a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I have two minutes to wrap up now. Would we divide after that? We'd like to force a recorded vote on this. Do we do that right after—

The Deputy Speaker: No. What will happen is, after you wrap up, then we will suspend proceedings until noon. Since there are no whips in private members' business, members know that the vote will be taken at noon. They can expect that a vote will be taken at noon, so we would just suspend proceedings until then.

Now you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Dunlop: I would like to thank the members from York North, Simcoe–Grey, Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford, Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, Waterloo–Wellington, Stoney Creek, London–Fanshawe, Perth–Middlesex and the member from Charlottenburgh for their comments. I do appreciate some of the fine comments that have been made here today. I hope that we can be very sincere as we proceed and support this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I did want to put on the record a couple of areas in particular that I felt should be brought to your attention. One is the fact that through this IGAP process, where we know there is going to be substantial growth, the conservation authority has been—it has been kind of controversial at times: people who support it and people who don't support it. I want to give credit in one area to the conservation authority, and that's the fact that in Gayle Wood's letter to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, she did point out that the conservation authority put this resolution forward: "That the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (LSRCA) board of directors and LSRCA staff take a very strong position against the options recommended, as they are in direct opposition to the goals and objectives of the LSRCA assimilative capacity study phosphorus targets."

I brought that up a few times earlier. That is something that we absolutely have to correct before we see this massive development in this Barrie-and-area option.

I also want to pay tribute to the Windfall Ecology Centre, which helped the Ladies of the Lake build the Naked Truth study—it's fantastic; it's something the government can use in its comprehensive plan—the One Voice Action Plan, the Lake Simcoe environmental strategy report; all of these, along with all the support we get from the people around the lake who want this lake protected for future generations.

I thank everyone for their comments this morning. I really hope we can get support, and support in the future, on this endeavour. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: We will now suspend proceedings until 12 o'clock.

The House suspended proceedings from 1148 to 1200.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

LONG-TERM CARE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We'll deal first with ballot item number 61, standing in the name of Mrs. Witmer.

Mrs. Witmer has moved private member's notice of motion number 27. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will call in the members after we deal with the next ballot item.

LAKE SIMCOE WATERSHED

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We'll now deal with ballot item number 62, standing in the name of Mr. Dunlop.

Mr. Dunlop has moved private member's notice of motion number 29. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1201 to 1206.

LONG-TERM CARE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mrs. Witmer has moved private member's notice of motion number 27.

All those in favour, please stand and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Balkissoon, Bas	Kwinter, Monte	Racco, Mario G.
Barrett, Toby	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramal, Khalil
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Leal, Jeff	Runciman, Robert W.
Bisson, Gilles	Levac, Dave	Sandals, Liz
Brownell, Jim	MacLeod, Lisa	Scott, Laurie
Chudleigh, Ted	Marsales, Judy	Smith, Monique
Delaney, Bob	Matthews, Deborah	Tabuns, Peter
Dhillon, Vic	McMeekin, Ted	Tascona, Joseph N.
Dunlop, Garfield	Miller, Norm	Van Bommel, Maria
Elliott, Christine	Milloy, John	Wilkinson, John
Fonseca, Peter	Mitchell, Carol	Wilson, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hudak, Tim	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John
Jeffrey, Linda	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Zimmer, David

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please stand and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Deputy Clerk (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 42; the nays are 0.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

The doors will be opened for 30 seconds before the next vote.

LAKE SIMCOE WATERSHED

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Dunlop has moved private member's notice of motion number 29.

All those in favour, please stand and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Balkissoon, Bas	Kwinter, Monte	Ramal, Khalil
Barrett, Toby	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Runciman, Robert W.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Bisson, Gilles	Levac, Dave	Scott, Laurie
Brownell, Jim	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Monique
Chudleigh, Ted	Marsales, Judy	Tabuns, Peter
Delaney, Bob	Matthews, Deborah	Tascona, Joseph N.
Dhillon, Vic	McMeekin, Ted	Van Bommel, Maria
Dunlop, Garfield	Miller, Norm	Wilkinson, John
Elliott, Christine	Milloy, John	Wilson, Jim
Fonseca, Peter	Mitchell, Carol	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hardeman, Ernie	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Yakabuski, John
Hudak, Tim	Munro, Julia	Zimmer, David
Jeffrey, Linda	Ouellette, Jerry J.	
Kormos, Peter	Racco, Mario G.	

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please stand and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Deputy Clerk (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 43; the nays are 0.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been dealt with, I do now leave the chair. The House will resume at 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1211 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

COURT FACILITY

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I rise today to discuss an important matter dealing with the new Durham consolidated courthouse in my riding of Oshawa.

Construction is under way, which will add another state-of-the-art facility to Oshawa's downtown core, along with the new arena—and my congratulations to the city on a job well done there—the YMCA, housing and numerous other activities and upgrades that have all added to Oshawa's downtown core.

The new courthouse will incorporate 33 courtrooms, five judicial hearing rooms, a 100-unit holding cell and related court and legal services.

Through the Durham Regional Police senior officers—as well as the rank-and-file officers, I might add—it has been brought to my attention that the Attorney General has directed the Durham Regional Police to

continue utilizing current police facilities for holding accused offenders even after the new courthouse is open. This practice will thereby duplicate the services the courthouse could offer. Presently, this service costs the Durham Regional Police in excess of \$3 million annually in transporting and transferring offenders back and forth between facilities.

Indeed, this modern facility should facilitate modern justice, and we need to ensure the most efficient use of our justice resources as well as our tax dollars. I urge the Attorney General and ministry officials to reconsider this strategy and work along with the Durham Regional Police to consolidate these important services, as this would represent a large tax savings to the taxpayers of Oshawa and the region of Durham as well as fewer delays in our justice system.

EXPLOSION IN VANKLEEK HILL

EXPLOSION À VANKLEEK HILL

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry–Prescott–Russell): It is with great pride that I stand today in the House to honour the exceptional efforts of residents and neighbours of the community of Vankleek Hill.

Il y a déjà un mois, cette communauté a subi une fuite de gaz naturel des plus atroces. Cette fuite fut la cause d'une explosion qui a détruit trois maisons et qui en a endommagé sévèrement 90 autres.

What is remarkable is the way this community reached out to those affected by the explosion. The fast actions of neighbours, the fire department and the various police and emergency services on the scene meant that only one person had minor injuries.

Emergency Management Ontario and engineers from Hawkesbury and Cornwall came to assess the other houses to make sure they were safe. Neighbours immediately opened their doors to take in the people whose homes were damaged in the explosion. Vankleek Hill Collegiate students self-organized a clean-up of Fournier Street to do their part. A Vankleek Hill emergency fund has been created to assist victims.

Je saisis l'occasion aujourd'hui pour remercier publiquement les bénévoles de cette communauté pour leurs efforts exceptionnels et leur réaction immédiate à cette tragédie.

I commend the mayor of Vankleek Hill, Gary Barton, for responding with calm and confidence, and I am incredibly proud of the overwhelming support and sense of community.

RELEASE OF PSYCHIATRIC OFFENDER

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): This week, the Ontario Review Board opted to allow David Carmichael to move out of the Brockville mental health forensic facility and begin reintegration into the community.

A little over a year ago, Mr. Carmichael was found not criminally responsible for the murder of his 11-year-old

epileptic son and was confined in a secure mental health facility for psychiatric treatment. Despite being considered by his psychiatrists as a significant risk to the public, the hospital and the prosecuting crown apparently supported Mr. Carmichael's release.

I am not in a position to assess the wisdom or lack of same with respect to the release decision. It has been made. What I do want to put on the record is my fervent request that the monitoring of Mr. Carmichael be thorough and intensive and that it should not be dropped on the doorstep of the Brockville Police Service.

The residents of Brockville have a right to view this decision with some trepidation. Not too many months ago, a pedophile on a day pass from the Brockville facility, and supposedly under constant supervision, attacked a young child in the washroom of a local Tim Hortons. There have been other instances in the past.

Those advocating for and supporting Mr. Carmichael's release have a responsibility to ensure that this man does not once again jeopardize public safety. I call on them to fulfill that obligation.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): I rise in the House to explain the need for part-time college instructors to have the right to bargain collectively. Part-time instructors are a crucial part of the education system in Ontario and should therefore have the same right to organize and collectively bargain as do other instructors.

Despite the government's ban on unionization of these valuable educational workers, faculty and support staff from Ontario's 24 colleges have recently formed an organization of part-time and sessional employees of colleges of applied arts and technology.

Recently the UN group, the ILO, otherwise known as the International Labour Organization, ruled that such workers be given the legal right to bargain collectively and urged the McGuinty Liberals to let this happen.

One part-time instructor criticized the current situation as "Third World," because of its exploitation of cheap labour that has no job security benefits. The United Nations agency report stated unambiguously that "there's no reason that the basic rights of association and collective bargaining shouldn't also apply to part-time workers."

I have addressed this abysmal situation in my private member's Bill 13, An Act to amend the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act with respect to part-time staff, which would allow for part-time instructors to be treated like first-class instructors. Simply because someone works in a profession on a part-time basis is no justification to deny them the same rights that colleagues have.

As a representative of a civilized society like Ontario, I want to say that I'm strongly urging this government to pass my private member's bill. After all, the whole world is watching us.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Bas Balkissoon (Scarborough–Rouge River): I want to speak today about the great health initiatives that are occurring in my riding of Scarborough–Rouge River. The McGuinty government has been a leader in health and health promotion, and I want to give some examples of how my riding of Scarborough–Rouge River has directly benefited from these initiatives.

I'm very excited about the state-of-the-art maternal newborn project occurring in the Rouge Valley Health System, to which the McGuinty government has contributed \$7.2 million. This project would have significant impacts on Ontario families who want to share in the birthing process together. Scarborough–Rouge River has also benefited from a \$55-million investment for the emergency room at Scarborough General, as well as \$17 million in base funding.

Yet another important project in my riding is the new community health centre in Malvern, which will eventually provide access to primary health care and community health programs for Ontarians who face systemic access barriers like race, language, poverty or disability.

While John Tory has said he will cut the health budget by \$2.4 billion, the McGuinty government recognizes the importance of focusing on the health of Ontarians and has committed to looking at ways to address both short- and long-term solutions to Ontarians' health issues. When it comes to the health of Ontarians, there's always more that can be done, but I want to thank the McGuinty government for making a difference in the health care system and for always striving to do more.

CONSIDERATION OF BILL 107

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Anyone watching the parliamentary channel last night might have wondered why bells were ringing in this Legislature. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that it's because of action taken by the McGuinty government: their muzzling of Ontario citizens on Bill 107, on the Ontario Human Rights Commission; that, after the government spent \$106,000—106,000 of your taxpayer dollars—alone on ads to advertise committee hearings.

Our leader, John Tory, asked if this debate could continue. We promised a vote at the earliest opportunity, which would have been March 19, 2007. We don't think that's unfair for a bill that hasn't been amended in 40 years. We think the public has a right to hear many people speak. There are over 200 people waiting for the opportunity to speak to Bill 107, and they were denied. They were muzzled of that opportunity.

That is why our party rang the bells in this Legislature last night. We felt it was appropriate. We do think that it was a mistake to muzzle the citizens of Ontario and would like to have had that opportunity to vote next March, after a lot of committee hearings, after a lot of opportunity for debate. Again, 106,000 of your tax dollars wasted as this government decided to muzzle the province of Ontario on Bill 107.

1340

PEEWEE BASEBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): Today I rise in the House to celebrate a tremendous accomplishment in my riding and in the city of Vaughan.

On the weekend of November 4 at the Baseball Canada Fall Convention, the city of Vaughan was selected as the host city for the 2008 Baseball Canada Championships in the peewee division. The championships will occur in August 2008. I'm pleased to let members know that several of the games will be played at one of the finest parks in my riding, Concord-Thornhill Regional Park, located on Racco Parkway.

The Baseball Canada Championships are held every year, featuring a variety of divisions, each played in a different location across the country. In the 36 years since its inception, no municipality in the GTA has ever hosted a national baseball championship in any of the divisions.

Vaughan is an ideal location for a national athletic tournament. It is centrally located in the GTA, close to the airport, has easy access to highways, a large volunteer community and is one of Canada's fastest-growing municipalities. Hosting the national baseball championship provides an excellent opportunity to showcase both the city of Vaughan and the province of Ontario.

The Vaughan Baseball Association has grown in six short years to become one of the largest and most respected youth baseball associations in Ontario, with a program of over 1,000 boys and girls, and growing each year. It is an honour to be hosting a national athletic competition of this calibre in my riding and in the city of Vaughan.

I would like to congratulate Frank Crudo, president of the Vaughan Baseball Association, and also former president Tom Pileggie, for working so hard to make Vaughan—and, I would say, Ontario—a destination for youth baseball.

WINE ATLAS OF CANADA

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): I rise today to bring the members' attention to some new, vital, must-have reading material: the new Wine Atlas of Canada. The Wine Atlas of Canada; I reiterate that. What I want people to realize is that while there are many wine atlases of regions all over the world, Canada now has so many excellent areas where wine is being produced—some of the best wines in the world—that it is deserving of its very own atlas.

I just want to read a little bit from the insert inside the book. It says, "Come taste the unique style of wines grown in your own backyard. Whether you are a devoted connoisseur"—like the member from Beaches–East York is—"or have yet to discover the joy of homegrown Canadian wines, the Wine Atlas of Canada will inspire you to tour the country's wineries, walk its vineyards and sample its award-winning wines."

I can tell you, representing a chunk of the Niagara area as I do, that some of the best wines in the world and the most delightful wineries in the most delightful settings are just down and around the highway in the Niagara Peninsula, and there's a whole section on that in here.

Also noted in here: We have to acknowledge Prince Edward county. Nobody ever would have thought you would be growing grapes and making wine there, but they are indeed doing it there. Congratulations to those pioneers.

Tony Aspler is the author, best known as a wine journalist, and also the creator of the Ontario Wine Awards. He worked with our member from Essex, Bruce Crozier, to create Ontario Wine Week.

UKRAINIAN GENOCIDE

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): I rise today to remind the members of this House of the 1933 famine and genocide that occurred in Ukraine. The exact number of victims is actually unknown, but we do know that more than seven million Ukrainian men, women and children starved to death under the Soviet occupation. This unimaginable horror was hidden from us, but because we now know that, we will never forget; we must never forget.

The week of November 18 to 25 has been set aside by Ukrainian Canadians to commemorate this tragic event in history. The Ukrainian Canadian Congress continues to raise public awareness and to educate us about this terrible tragedy. They teach in our schools to ensure that our youth understand and learn so they too will remember.

Speaker, we need to know about and remember events like this. We need to pass on this information to our next generation. It is education and awareness that raises the profile and hopefully helps future generations from a repeat of this kind of horror in our world history. These victims cannot and should not be forgotten.

The work of the congress is an inspiration. It reminds us of our humanity and our inhumanity. They have taken a tragedy and turned it into a commemorative that will not be forgotten to teach us never to repeat this again. Those victims will never be forgotten.

I know that all members of this House will join me in congratulations to the congress for the good work they do so we never repeat this kind of tragedy again.

VISITORS

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to welcome two guests to the Legislature today. One is Mr. Stephen Moranis, a long-term friend, past president of the Toronto Real Estate Board and entrepreneur; and his cousin Lawrence Dale. In her absence, I would like to pay tribute to Stephen's sister, Ms. Terry Moranis, who passed away earlier this year—a wonderful role model for women, a hard worker and a dedicated community person in her own right. Welcome, gentlemen.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

DIRECT ELECTION OF THE NIAGARA REGIONAL CHAIR ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR L'ÉLECTION AU SCRUTIN GÉNÉRAL DU PRÉSIDENT DU CONSEIL RÉGIONAL DE NIAGARA

Mr. Hudak moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 163, An Act to provide for the direct election of the Niagara Regional Council chair / Projet de loi 163, Loi prévoyant l'élection au scrutin général du président du conseil régional de Niagara.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie—Lincoln): I appreciate members' support upon first reading. I think it's time for the election of the position of regional chair in Niagara to enter the 21st century. This has been successfully implemented in Kitchener—Waterloo and Halton, our sister regions. If passed, this will ensure that any candidates, beginning in the 2010 municipal election, will need to get their mandate directly from the taxpayers who foot the bill. So issues like the compost facility proposed for Lincoln, for example, the water and sewer issue in Wainfleet and adequate police coverage in Grimsby or Fort Erie will be subject to debate and scrutiny by the taxpayers of those who would like to be the regional chair.

COMMUNITY RIGHT TO KNOW ACT (DISCLOSURE OF TOXINS AND POLLUTANTS), 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR LE DROIT DU PUBLIC D'ÊTRE INFORMÉ (DIVULGATION DES TOXINES ET DES POLLUANTS)

Mr. Tabuns moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 164, An Act to amend the Consumer Protection Act, 2002, the Environmental Protection Act and the Occupational Health and Safety Act / Projet de loi 164, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2002 sur la protection du consommateur, la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement et la Loi sur la santé et la sécurité au travail.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto—Danforth): This bill, also known as "The community right to know law," will provide the public with tools to protect themselves from toxic chemicals, requirements for labelling, reporting public accessed information; it will contribute to cancer prevention. In this, it follows the path that's been blazed by California, Vermont and the European Union.

1350

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding meeting times of the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I move that the standing committee on regulations and private bills be authorized to meet on Wednesday, December 6, 2006, from 3:30 p.m. until 6 p.m. for the purpose of conducting clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 124, An Act to provide for fair registration practices in Ontario's regulated professions.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. The motion is carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

CYSTIC FIBROSIS

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): It's a privilege to have a chance today to welcome, in the members' east gallery, visitors who have dedicated themselves in a variety of ways to issues related to cystic fibrosis.

It's a great pleasure for me to rise in this chamber today to announce a new program that will result in early diagnosis and treatment of one of our most dreaded childhood diseases, cystic fibrosis.

Cystic fibrosis, or CF, is the most common fatal genetic disease affecting young Canadians. It is estimated that one in every 3,600 children born in Ontario has CF.

Cystic fibrosis affects mainly the lungs and digestive system. It causes severe breathing problems and often leads to serious infections. It also makes it difficult to digest and absorb adequate nutrients from food.

While there is no cure for cystic fibrosis, we know that early detection and treatment can reduce the need for demanding therapies, which can lead to fewer days in hospital and lower rates of complications, and increase life expectancy.

By screening newborns for cystic fibrosis, we can ensure that babies who need treatment will receive it as soon as possible. This will give them the best treatment

and care possible, and by reducing the disease's burden throughout the years, it will lead to an enhanced quality of life.

Ensuring that Ontario's newborns get the best start in life is a key priority for our government. That's why today, by adding screening for cystic fibrosis, we're expanding the province's newborn screening program to screen for 28 rare disorders.

Although most babies with these disorders look healthy at birth, they may be at risk of having serious health problems, including developmental disabilities, recurrent sickness and even death, if their disorder is not detected in the first days of life and treated. Early identification is the key to effective treatment.

In November 2005, our government announced the expansion of its newborn screening program to 27 tests by the end of 2006. These tests are performed by a state-of-the-art screening based at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario in Ottawa. The lab at CHEO began operations in April 2006, and since then, using this newly implemented technology, more than 90,000 infants' blood samples have already been screened.

Given Ontario's annual birth rate of 140,000 and a clinic incidence rate of one child in every 3,600 having CF, newborn screening could lead to approximately 40 babies each year being diagnosed within the first weeks of life and getting early treatment for this debilitating condition.

Blood samples from every child born in Ontario are sent to the lab, where they are currently being tested for 24 different conditions, with three more on track to begin by the end of this year. Screening for CF, which will bring the total number of tests to 28, will begin in 2007, once new equipment has been calibrated.

Investments in the implementation of the enhanced program totalled \$5 million for the one-time purchase of technology, as well as \$7.6 million annually to support the newborn screening program and its testing facility at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario. Specifically for CF screening, we will be making an initial investment of approximately \$670,000 to purchase new screening technology, and an additional \$1.2 million will be allocated annually to incorporate testing for cystic fibrosis into the newborn screening program housed at CHEO.

Fortunately, these childhood disorders are very rare, affecting roughly 110 of approximately 130,000 or 140,000 babies born each year in Ontario. By testing newborns within the first days of life, we can ensure that they are treated early, reducing the chance of serious health problems later in life.

I'd like to acknowledge, amongst others, Dr. Michael Geraghty and Dr. Pranesh Chakraborty, co-heads of the Ontario newborn screening program at CHEO. They should be acknowledged for the fine work that they have done. Despite the fact that everybody in the field said that they would not be able to meet the deadlines that were placed upon them, they have brought this program in on time, to the benefit of Ontario's children.

With the addition of cystic fibrosis to the expanded panel of disorders, Ontario is now screening for a broader

range of diseases than any other Canadian jurisdiction. And every newborn baby in Ontario is screened. Ontario's enhanced screening panel includes three blood disorders, like sickle cell disease, a Canadian first, in addition to one endocrine disorder and two others. Ontario already screens newborns for hearing deficits.

Today's announcement is just the latest example of how the McGuinty government is on the side of Ontario families concerned about their children's health. Other initiatives include:

- adding three new vaccines, free of charge, to protect against chicken pox, meningococcal and pneumococcal disease;

- funding insulin pumps and related supplies for about 1,000 children living with type 1 diabetes;

- funding the expansion of the hematology and cancer outpatient clinic at the Hospital for Sick Children.

Newborn screening for cystic fibrosis is part of the McGuinty government's plan for innovation in health care, building a health care system that delivers on three priorities: keeping all Ontarians healthy, reducing wait times, and enhancing access to doctors and to nurses.

Innovation in health care has been one of the defining characteristics of this government. This new program is just one more part of that agenda of innovation. As well, as with all of the other health care reforms we've introduced, our purpose is clear: It is to preserve and strengthen Ontario's health care system, our public health care system. Our government believes passionately that our health care system is the best system for Ontario patients and is the best system for our province, enhancing our economic competitiveness and making us a more desirable place to live, to work and to invest.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Responses?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): Certainly, on behalf of our leader and the Progressive Conservative caucus, we are overjoyed that screening is going to be added for cystic fibrosis. We all know that early identification is the key to effective treatment. I would like to congratulate those medical specialists and also those individuals who have worked so hard in order to ensure that this program is going to be available for our young children. It certainly is a very, very positive announcement, because we all know that this is a very common, unfortunately fatal genetic disease that affects many young Canadians. We've heard it affects their lungs, their digestive systems.

Personally, some years ago I had the opportunity of becoming quite well acquainted with a family whose child did have cystic fibrosis, and I was able to see firsthand that this child had to consume a number of artificial enzymes, on average something in the neighbourhood of 20 pills a day with every meal and snack, in order to help them absorb adequate nutrition from their food. The other thing I observed, of course, was the daily routine of physical therapy that they had to undergo in order to keep their lungs free of congestion and infection.

The announcement today is going to help all of those children who are yet to be born. We know that there is no

cure, but certainly this announcement today gives these families and these children hope, and it's a very, very positive step forward.

We also know that the comprehensive treatment that is available to those who have cystic fibrosis has dramatically extended their lives. We know that today many people are living into their 20s and 30s and beyond, and that's good news. But we need to make sure that we continue to do everything that we can for people in the province of Ontario.

1400

It was just one year ago that a permanent advisory committee was established to provide oversight and ongoing advice to the government on its newborn screening program, and that Dr. Joe Clarke, the head of clinical metabolic genetics at the Hospital for Sick Children, was to chair that committee. I know they were taking a look at whether a test for cystic fibrosis should be part of the newborn screening program. That was November 2, 2005.

The good news is that today, about a year later, we now know that they're going to be testing for cystic fibrosis. This is good news because this week we also heard—or I guess it was last month—that Alberta was going to be screening newborns for cystic fibrosis as well. Hopefully, other provinces in Canada will also step up to the plate.

We know that there are about 3,600 babies in Canada who have the disease, so certainly this newborn screening is going to have a very, very positive impact on those children who are going to suffer from breathing and digestion problems. So that's important.

I learned how important it is for families to be supported when their children have these diseases without a cure. I had the opportunity this week to travel to Sick Kids Hospital, just down the street. I had the opportunity to visit with Isaac McFadyen, a young boy who has MPS VI. His family had lobbied the government in order that he could receive treatment for his disease, a disease that, in his case, included the development of short stature, joint stiffness, clouding of the cornea, water on the brain and compression of the spinal cord.

After appealing to the government to provide the necessary funding, and with the support of the family who worked very hard on Isaac's behalf, there was agreement. We know that Dr. Joe Clarke was one of the individuals who had said that "many of the problems of this disease can be reversed and may even be better preventable if ERT is started early enough."

I'm pleased to say that because young Isaac is now getting support and treatment, this little boy, in a matter of months, is so much healthier. We need to do what we can for our young children in order to give them the best opportunity in life.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I want to begin by talking to you about our neighbours; not our neighbours here in Toronto, but neighbours that I grew up with.

A number of years ago, our neighbour across the street had her first infant boy. Everybody thought everything

was okay. She became pregnant with the second child and during the course of that pregnancy discovered that the first child had cystic fibrosis. I can't begin to tell you the anxiety, the concern and the stress that was associated with that second pregnancy, with the family and their extended family wondering whether or not the second child too was going to be born with cystic fibrosis.

As it turned out, the second child did not have cystic fibrosis. Both are now young adults. Certainly, the first child has lived much longer than anybody had expected; he's well into his mid 20s now and is doing very well. But at the time, it was certainly a source of concern and anxiety.

I am very pleased that we will, in Ontario, be screening for cystic fibrosis, because no parent, no set of parents, no family, no extended family should have to go through the anxiety, the stress, the concern and everything that that family went through and everything that that mom went through during her second pregnancy and later on after the child was born before they finally knew whether or not the second child indeed had cystic fibrosis.

The second point that I want to raise is that there certainly was concern, when the government announced this program, as to whether or not it could be up and running within the timelines that the government had set, particularly at CHEO. I, too, want to commend both of the doctors and the other extended staff who have been part and parcel of the huge effort to make sure that the newborn screening program could be up and running and could be delivered on time, on budget, and that the public information that is necessary to go out about that is going out. Frankly, they have done a phenomenal job, the whole group of CHEO, to get this up and running and to start to have many more infants in the province screened and tested.

The third point that I want to raise has to do with: What do we do now with information when we discover that someone is a carrier? I just want to reflect on this, because I have just recently seen some information about a study that the ministry is going to fund now with respect to that very issue. The critical issue is this: If, through testing newborns, it is discovered that the newborn is a carrier, for example of sickle cell disease—let me just use that, but there are a number that we could use—what does the hospital do with that information? What does the doctor do with that information? What is the obligation of the health care system to advise the family, to advise that child at a later date? Because there are some quite serious ramifications with respect to pregnancies that flow from that if you are a carrier.

I see that the ministry is funding the Centre for Health Economics and Policy Analysis to do some really critical work about what the comprehensive strategy will be around this very critical issue. As I look at the information that has gone out to some of the people who have been asked to participate, the particular discussion will include, for example: What should be the goals and responsibilities of Ontario's newborn screening program? Secondly, who should provide information about new-

born screening to parents, and when—that's a critical question—should this information be provided? Thirdly, newborn screening can identify infants who are not affected by a disorder but who carry a gene for the disorder and can pass that gene on to their children. This can affect the infant's reproductive choices in the future and the parents' decisions about having more children. So how should information about carrier status then be handled?

This work is extremely critical. We are testing now for many more diseases than ever before. That information is becoming available in a way that it never has before, and we have to be very clear what the public policy issues are in relation to how we disclose that really critical health information after we discover that infants are carriers.

So I hope that there will be a number of people who will participate in that particular study. I know that a number of people have been asked to—they are leaders in the field of newborn screening—and I hope that the ministry, in getting that information through the policy centre, will be able at a very early date to develop its policy in this regard. We really do need to have these significant issues addressed. Doctors, hospitals, families and the program itself need to know what they're dealing with in terms of very sensitive but very important information, and the sooner we can get those policy issues in place, the better we will be.

VISITORS

Ms. Deborah Matthews (London North Centre):

Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: I'd like to ask all members of the Legislature to join me in welcoming Bill and Annabel Sells from the great riding of London North Centre, who are joining us today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

VIOLENT CRIME

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition):

My question is for the Premier. Today the Prime Minister announced a plan to bring in reverse onus bail for gun crimes and other violent crimes. This is a move by the federal government which we applaud, and we're pleased to see the Prime Minister acting on this important issue. While the federal government is taking steps to battle crime, your government has done very little.

My question for the Premier is this: As we wait for this bill to make its way through the Parliament of Canada, will he ask the Attorney General to give even clearer instructions to his crown attorneys, the crown attorneys in the province of Ontario, that all applications for bail by people accused of crimes involving guns and violence or who are already out on bail on previous charges and are then charged with additional crimes, will be opposed and appealed if granted—no ifs, ands or buts? Will he ensure

that his Attorney General will give that instruction to the crown attorneys?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I know that the Attorney General is going to want to add something to this, but let me just say at the outset that I was very pleased earlier today to attend an event with Prime Minister Harper and Mayor David Miller.

Shortly after the tragedy that befell a young woman on the streets of Toronto about 12 months ago, I wrote to all the leaders of the federal political parties and asked that they move on a number of fronts, in fact on six separate fronts, and I'm very pleased to report to this House that Prime Minister Harper has agreed to move on four of those fronts, including the announcement that he made earlier today.

1410

More than anything else, what it demonstrates is that when it comes to anything or anyone that threatens the safety and security of our families, these are the kinds of issues that transcend partisan politics. I want to take this opportunity to commend Prime Minister Harper for working with us in that regard.

Mr. Tory: It's only in this great spirit of non-partisanship, unfortunately, that you wouldn't also acknowledge the fact that the official opposition in this House put out a position paper long before your letter advocating many of exactly the same things—long before your letter and long after you'd been months without saying anything about the crime issue.

In fact, Scott Newark, a former provincial prosecutor and vice-chair of the Ontario Office for Victims of Crime, speaking today about what the Premier was doing, said that you seemed to be talking a good line today, but that you are the same man who was hatching a plan in your cabinet room to cut down on the number of people charged, to cut back on sentences, to increase the number of plea bargains and to let out more people on parole. He said, when you were standing there today on the platform, that the government of Canada will have its hands full keeping its eye on you to make sure you're really going to follow through on your word.

If you're as committed to fighting gun crimes as you claim, then I ask the Premier, why won't you agree to ensure that bail is opposed by your crown attorneys in all cases involving guns and other violent crimes for people who are already out on bail?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): Firstly, I know the leader of the official opposition is endeavouring to give credit where credit is due, and I think an enormous amount of credit needs to be given to the Premier of Ontario for his leadership when it comes to gun violence. Not only have we called on the federal government to make the changes that we did—if the leader of official opposition ended up joining this parade late, better late than never—but this was the Premier who announced, in one fell swoop, the single greatest expansion of our criminal justice system in the entire history of the province of

Ontario. So I know that when the leader of the official opposition stands up for his final supplementary, he's going to applaud the Premier for his leadership on fighting gun violence in the province.

Mr. Tory: I'm quite prepared to do exactly that, and say that I welcome the Premier getting aboard—better late than never—on this, because we were there months earlier. It's only unfortunate that the Attorney General spent the very same summer all this was going on somewhere in a hammock doing nothing. So that's great.

Now, with all these great crime fighters over there, I would just ask this, and my question is to the Premier: If you're really serious about fighting crime, then why would you not agree to have statistics reported to the public, many of which are in fact collected right now, on bail violations, bail applications, how many are approved, and details on sentencing and so forth? We have a motion coming to the floor of this House next Tuesday that will attempt to make sure we can keep an eye on how things are working and increase transparency in the justice system. Why would you not agree to keep those statistics and make them public so that there are some benchmarks where the public can see exactly what's going on beyond all the talk? Will you agree to it?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: The truth is that when it comes to criminal justice, the member has fallen far, far behind on the efforts not only of this province but of other provinces. It requires not only vigilance in terms of the independent crown policy manual—which already takes a position with respect to gun crimes, wherein we absolutely fully prosecute gun crimes to the fullest extent and oppose bail on gun crimes. We already do that. With respect to efforts on prevention to ensure that we are reaching out to those communities to give people opportunities, many of the opportunities that were taken away by the Harris-Eves government, we're doing that through the Premier's challenge fund.

We're also doing it in terms of the way in which organized justice in the province of Ontario puts police and prosecutors and all aspects of the justice system in one place. It's called the operations centre, which will be operational very soon. These are just some of the innovations—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. New question.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Premier. I guess, for the record, that means no to the bail applications being opposed for gun crimes and no to the making public of those statistics, so that's just for the record.

Now to the Premier, this time on waste: We've had thousands of visits to the wastebusters.ca website, as Ontarians are clearly very eager to report their concerns about waste by the McGuinty government. I have a couple of questionable items—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Stop the clock. The Attorney General, you need to come to order. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: I've got a couple of questionable items I want to ask the Premier about today. Last week we heard about the questionable spending of the Ministry of Education: \$1.2 million in one year on hotel rooms. Now we find out—

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Half of Elizabeth Witmer's spending for the same things.

The Speaker: The Minister of Health will come to order. Minister of Health.

Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: So we now find out that the Ministry of Health has spent \$1.4 million on hotel rooms in one year, 2005-06.

My question for the Premier is this: What is going on in these hotel rooms such that the taxpayers of Ontario are being asked to pay their health and other taxes to the tune of \$1.4 million for hotel rooms in one year at the Ministry of Health when they don't have enough money for health care? What is going on in these hotel rooms? Why are you booking them and paying for them?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: One could only assume that the honourable member has played the same trick that he did with last week's numbers, which is to take an item which is most certainly not about the word "hotels" but rather more about travel, which, of course, could include a variety of different things contributing to it, and to spin that out. Last week's storyline that he used was related to the Ministry of Education, but what he didn't say was that it was for travel, not just hotels. What he also didn't say is that the very same ministry under the deputy leader of that party produced twice the expenditure rate.

Obviously, the Ministry of Health has a substantial role to play in working with Ontarians all across Ontario to address underlying challenges in health care. I think it's not particularly surprising that an organization that spends \$36 billion and has 6,700 full-time-equivalents might have some expenditure related to travel. If the honourable member has very particular examples that he'd like to raise with me directly or in another way, I'd be very happy to take a look at them and to justify them to all taxpayers.

Mr. Tory: I'll do just that, because you've tried to pretend here that this is some much broader category of travel and a whole bunch of other things. In fact, I'll give you the list: Best Western Hotels, \$63,000; Delta Chelsea Inn, \$153,000; Holiday Inns, \$127,000; Marriott Hotels, \$190,000; Mountainview Properties for a chalet in Collingwood, \$66,000. You could have bought it cheaper with the taxpayers' money. Ramada Inn, \$50,000; Staybridge Suites, \$381,000; Westin Hotels, \$100,000—\$1.4 million. But the best one, for all these people who seem to need rooms, is \$271,000 at the Sutton Place, one block from this building. We've got meeting rooms galore in

this government complex here and the fat cats have to go and rent rooms on your instruction and spend \$271,000 of the taxpayers' money to rent hotel rooms.

What is going on in those hotel rooms? How do you have the gall to spend the taxpayers' money, the health tax you said you wouldn't impose, Premier—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Firstly, if there is anyone in this place who knows a fat cat, it's the honourable member. But if there is anyone in this place who has done such a disservice to property values in Collingwood, it too is the honourable member.

The honourable member would benefit from a couple of things. Firstly, in no circumstance does the Ministry of Health engage a property like a hotel that is adjacent to the Queen's Park complex if it's available. Yes, indeed, there are quite a few meeting rooms in the Macdonald block, and we take extraordinary advantage of those whenever that's appropriate.

In health care in Ontario it is appropriate, on a variety of different bases, to bring together practitioners, providers and others who are involved in making important decisions under one roof. Accordingly, there are costs associated with that. I believe most Ontarians would understand that a ministry that is that large and has such important work would from time to time bring people together under the same roof. Obviously—

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary.

1420

Mr. Tory: Even the fact that you described taxpayer-paid-for facilities as free just shows you don't get it. You talk about bringing people together from time to time. Well, let's see if this is "time to time." At the average room rates, what you're doing is 1,033 nights at the Delta Chelsea; 1,451 nights at the Marriott, 2,544 nights at the Staybridge Suites and, as we said earlier, you could buy an entire chalet at the place you laid out \$60,000 in Collingwood to have one of your meetings.

There's not enough money for emergency rooms, there's not enough money to hire nurses, there's not enough money for PET scans, there's no money to help the families of autistic children, but you can spend \$1.4 million on hotel rooms in one year in your ministry. It's a disgrace. Get up and say that you're not going to keep doing it and that you know it's wrong. Why don't you do that?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: We have provided more money for autism. We have enhanced resources for emergency rooms. We do have a very substantial PET scan trial that's going on. But what does the honourable member say about Gord Haugh's salary, \$300,000 for communications, when your party had the privilege that I hold? What about the fact that in 2002-03 your party's government spend \$115,000 at the Holiday Inn, \$107,000 at the Sutton Place, \$59,000 at the Sheraton?

Does the honourable member really want to be taken seriously? Is he really prepared to stand in his place and suggest that in a future government that he leads, no hotel-room, no hotel expenditure in the province of

Ontario shall ever be necessary to bring people together? This is the assertion that you're making to the people in the province of Ontario. You're nodding your head yes. That defies all credibility. Expenses of our ministers: down 21%; advertising: down 34%; consultants: down 34%. The reality is that we have dedicated ourselves to the mission of spending money very wisely, and the people of Ontario will see through—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Interjections.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues): Right down the toilet, John.

The Speaker: The Minister of Economic Development and Trade will come to order.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I have a question for the Premier. Yesterday, the McGuinty government voted down an NDP motion that proposed some positive solutions to the loss of 136,000 manufacturing and forest sector jobs in Ontario. That resolution called for "a reasonable hydro policy that can sustain jobs and the creation of a job protection commissioner for Ontario—as recommended by the NDP job protection act." My question is this, Premier: After the destruction of 136,000 manufacturing and forest sector jobs under your watch, how could the McGuinty government vote against a resolution to find a way to keep and sustain manufacturing and forest sector jobs in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): The resolution put forward ignores entirely a few things. I can understand why it serves the leader of the NDP's purposes to ignore these things.

First of all, the challenges that beset the Ontario forestry sector are challenges that beset the North American forestry sector. I know that he wouldn't want to pretend that somehow the circumstances that obtain here don't obtain in Quebec, New Brunswick and British Columbia, for example.

Furthermore, the resolution ignores the fact that we have been working long and hard with our forestry sector, our northern communities, our northern Ontario workers and our northern Ontario families. That's why we've come to the table with over \$1 billion and a special support plan to help our forestry sector, to help bolster that sector, to help transition it to a point where it's more productive, more competitive, more value-added. That's why we did not support that particular resolution: because it ignores reality here in Ontario.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, here's a comment on reality. It's from the Thunder Bay Chronicle Journal, which says, "Lest anyone think [McGuinty's announcement] will make 'the big difference' ... one read of the devastating memo Bowater sent to its Thunder Bay employees the same day McGuinty flew into town dispels the notion in

a hurry." The same day you make your announcement, Bowater says they're laying off.

But I think what really hurt was the comment from the Minister of Natural Resources yesterday when he said that northern Ontario forest sector communities have gotten off relatively scot-free. Premier, is your Minister of Natural Resources going to apologize for that insensitive and out-of-touch comment?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Let me take the opportunity to better acquaint the leader of the NDP and all of my colleagues in this House with the depth of my Minister of Natural Resources' commitment, perseverance, determination and passion when it comes to standing up for northern Ontario, the forestry sector, northern Ontario communities and northern Ontario families.

The leader of the NDP enjoys the luxury of forever being in a position where he can simply wave a magic wand. We on this side of the House have got to make some difficult decisions. We've been working very long and very hard with the sector, and I mean the executives, I'm talking about the management, I'm talking about the workers as well, the families, the mayors, the communities—everyone—doing what we can in a collaborative way, in a thoughtful way, in a co-operative way and in a determined way to strengthen that sector.

It may serve the purposes of the leader of the NDP to castigate my Minister of Natural Resources, but he hasn't seen him behind closed doors, he hasn't seen him advocating on behalf of the sector, and he hasn't seen him standing up for northern Ontario families, northern Ontario communities and northern Ontario workers.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, what the public has seen of your Minister of Natural Resources is this: When forest sector companies came here two and a half years ago and said to your government, "Look, we're under a lot of competitive pressure. If you drive up hydro rates by what we see in your plan, you will destroy dozens of mills and thousands of jobs," you know what? People in forest sector communities didn't even hear your Minister of Natural Resources. People who believe and know now that the softwood lumber deal is a bad deal saw your Minister of Natural Resources say it was a good deal. As people are continuing to be laid off this week, even after you patted yourself on the back, they heard your Minister of Natural Resources' comment that people in northern Ontario forest sector communities are getting off scot-free. That's what people have seen of the McGuinty government's Minister of Natural Resources.

My question again: Is your minister going to apologize to the thousands of laid-off workers when he says that they've gotten off scot-free?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: It's always fascinating to listen to the leader of the NDP's idiosyncratic interpretations of activities on the part of our government.

Let me just say this: When it comes to the depth of our commitment to northern Ontario, northern Ontario communities, northern Ontario families and northern Ontario workers, I'd ask them to take a look at the record of our support. The level of support is without precedent. We

have risen to the occasion because the extent of the challenges, the extent of this globalized competition which faces our northern forestry sector, is also without precedent. So we have come to the table with a package of over \$1 billion: everything from \$150 million over three years for our forest sector prosperity fund; we have uploaded the costs of roads to the tune of \$75 million annually—that continues indefinitely; and we've also offered a one-time stumpage fee refund.

The leader of the NDP well knows, for example, that electricity prices in Quebec are far less than ours, and that forestry sector has been under a much more severe attack and more severe damage.

WASTE DIVERSION

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): Premier, I think everybody across northern Ontario would say “too little, too late” and “completely out of touch” in respect of your government.

I want to ask you about the city of Guelph, which is an acknowledged leader in large-scale composting, yet in May, the McGuinty government refused a much-needed funding request to help rebuild the roof of Guelph's composting facility. As a consequence, perhaps the most successful composting facility was forced to close. Under the McGuinty government, Guelph's pioneering waste management system has gone from leader to loser.

Premier, you aren't even halfway close to keeping your promise to divert 60% of waste from landfills by the end of 2007. When do you intend to start funding waste management leaders like Guelph instead of shutting them down?

1430

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I know that the Minister of Agriculture will have something to say about the COMRIF program, but let me first speak to the endeavours that this government is undertaking to ensure that municipalities right across this province increase waste diversion.

We are working very closely with communities such as Guelph to make sure that those municipalities have the tools they need to increase waste diversion. We will see coming on line in this province a household hazardous waste diversion program, a special waste diversion program. For the very first time, communities right across the province that have been expending dollars to ensure they divert that waste will now have dollars flowing to them. Similarly, we're responding to another critical issue that all Ontarians are demanding: that we divert our electronics waste.

When dollars flow through Waste Diversion Ontario to those municipalities, they will be able to see increased diversion. Those communities that are working hard right across the province to have organic waste diversion programs will be able to spend their municipal dollars increasing waste diversion yet again.

Mr. Hampton: I can understand why the Premier didn't want to answer the question. I didn't think we were going to fail to get an answer from the minister, as well.

Premier, organic waste is a resource, not garbage. Who said that? Dalton McGuinty in the 2003 election campaign. Guelph's organic waste was unrestricted grade A compost, compost so clean it was sold to topsoil blenders, but under the McGuinty government, no longer. Under the McGuinty government, for the past six months, Guelph's organic waste has been trucked to New York state and burned. In 2003, you said organic waste was too valuable to be used as landfill, but in 2006, your funding failure means grade A compost is being incinerated in New York state.

Premier, will you immediately implement the waste diversion strategy so municipal leaders like Guelph can escape the swamp of your waste management failure?

Hon. Ms. Broten: I guess my friend opposite is suggesting that the Ministry of the Environment should not enforce our regulations and standards. That is not a Ministry of the Environment that I would be proud of in this province. Our ministry wants to see standards complied with, and the facility in Guelph was having challenges complying with our standards in this province. That has resulted in changes being made to Guelph's waste management strategy, but we are working closely with that community to ensure that they will be able to have a facility that is in compliance. But it is absolutely critical in this province that rules and regulations and certificates of approval be complied with. That's the province that we want to leave. That's the legacy that we are going to leave in this province. Those rules must be enforced, and I'm proud of the enforcement being done by the Ministry of the Environment to make sure that our environment is clean and safe and that our air is safe to breathe.

Mr. Hampton: I can't believe it. This was a successful composting operation. All it needed was some funding from the McGuinty government to refurbish the roof so it could continue to operate. Instead, the government that pats itself on the back and promises so much denied the funding, shut it down, and now grade A compost is being trucked to New York state and incinerated.

Your policy on waste diversion amounts to this: Bury it and burn it. The people of London know that thanks to the Green Lane landfill and the mega-expansion.

Premier, in opposition you pleaded that no community be compelled to take another community's garbage against its will. Yet the hallmark of your government is forcing garbage on unwilling communities. Communities like London, Guelph and Sarnia are forced to bear the burden of your failed policies. Where is your waste diversion and funding strategy so at least something can get done?

Hon. Ms. Broten: The leader of the third party wants to have it both ways. He wants to see us have an environment that's clean and safe, but he wants us to turn a blind eye when we have facilities that are not in com-

pliance. The city of Guelph has reached a determination as to how they would manage their municipal waste stream, and they have reached a determination to shut that facility down because it could not reach compliance with our standards. We're working very closely with communities right across the province to see diversion of some 480,000 tonnes of household organics every single year. Communities right across the province are embracing a green bin program, and we are working hard with municipalities to give them the tools they need to make sure our approvals process and other processes allow us to see increased diversion right across the province.

Is there more work to do? Absolutely. Are we going to work with those municipalities every step of the way to see increased municipal—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. New question.

CONSIDERATION OF BILL 107

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): On Tuesday evening, I was privileged to be able to speak here in the Legislature about how the then Premier John Robarts spoke, upon the introduction of the original Ontario Code of Human Rights, about how important he thought it was that he and the then leader of the opposition Liberal Party, Mr. Wintermeyer, and Mr. Bryden of the New Democratic Party, saw it as an imperative that they should work together to form a consensus on that original bill that passed through the Legislature at that historic time. In responding that night in the Legislature, the present Attorney General said that kind of co-operation and consensus-building just wasn't possible anymore in this Parliament, for reasons he didn't elaborate on.

I have offered, on behalf of the official opposition, to guarantee that this matter would be brought to a vote the first week back in the Legislature in the spring if you, in return, offer to hear the hundreds of people who want to be heard on this bill, representing some of the most marginalized and vulnerable people. Barbara Hall, June Callwood, the Canadian Jewish Congress and the Toronto Star say you are risking divisions and polarization on this matter if you proceed with your current course of guillotining the discussions. I have made an offer in good faith. Will you consider it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I know the leader of the official opposition would want to recall that, without getting into the details of the number of times that closures were invoked—

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): One hundred and three times.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: One hundred and three—sorry, Speaker; we're actually going to get into the details—separate occasions by the previous Conservative government. We've had seven public hearings taking place in four different communities. The call for change started at

least 14 years ago with respect to how we might improve Ontario's human rights system. The legislation has been under discussion now for over 200 days. We have heard over 75 presenters. We've received over 40 written submissions.

On the basis of the good advice we've got from those people who are interested in this bill, we will be introducing more amendments. We are eager to move forward with this. We think Ontarians who rely on our human rights system have waited long enough.

Mr. Tory: Some of those facts in terms of how long it has actually been under discussion are not consistent with the facts.

The Premier is very fond of talking about the past, but we're talking about what is going on today in terms of a time allocation motion that you have brought in. You said you were going to be different, especially, I would have thought, on a foundation piece of legislation like this that goes to the human rights of the people of Ontario.

If we thought you were in a rush because you had everything ready to go, that might be another thing. One of the centrepieces of this bill is the promise that everybody who requires representation under the bill will get it, but you have no idea how that's going to happen. We hear the Attorney General has been to Management Board twice looking for money and been turned down. We have a letter from Legal Aid Ontario saying they're not interested in running this support centre which will help these most vulnerable and marginalized people to get representation.

If you don't have any idea how you're going to implement it, why the rush? Why wouldn't you agree to a reasonable compromise proposal that says you will hear from all those who might just have an idea as to how we can improve the bill? It might just avoid the polarization and bitterness. Hear from them and we will agree to put this matter to a vote the first week back. Why would you not agree to consider that?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): In fact, what has happened is that, as a result of the consultations before the bill was introduced and in the more than 200 days that have passed since the bill was introduced, and because of the committee hearings and the consultations outside, we were able to propose a number of amendments—as the member has already conceded, dozens of amendments—

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Bryant: —the subject of which has been offered a technical amendment to the official opposition. Formal amendments will be filed again next week. As a result of that, we've made changes. We've made changes to the way in which the Human Rights Commission would work, we've made changes to the way in which the tribunal would work, and we've clarified the way in which the legal support centre would work.

So, for example, the MS Society, which was before the committee today, said that they were originally

opposed to the bill, but that they were consulted, they felt they were listened to and that their amendments were addressed, and that they now support the bill. So we have been listening. We've made changes as a result of those—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. New question.

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto-Danforth): My question is for the Premier. Premier, today I tabled Ontario's first Community Right to Know Act. It's based on the principle that the public has the right to know about the toxic chemicals they're exposed to. Part of that bill involves assigning labels to consumer products that contain known or suspected carcinogens.

Your Minister of Health yesterday, when asked by reporters, said that he saw this as an important issue. Premier, do you support the community's right to know which toxins they are exposed to?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I look forward to having a chance to take a look at my friend's bill. I know that I have had a chance to look at the work being done by community organizations such as TEA, who came into my own community and informed my own community in Etobicoke-Lakeshore about some of the historical challenges that exist when you have a community that's had an industrial base for a long period of time. It is important information, and I look forward to having a chance to read your bill.

Mr. Tabuns: I'll go back to the Premier. Premier, I'll be putting forth this bill for second reading debate and vote next Thursday. Moving forward with this bill will give Ontario an opportunity to be an environmental leader. Will you show leadership to ensure this bill does not simply get buried but goes forward to committee and comes to a final vote before the end of this government's term?

Hon. Ms. Broten: As I indicated, at the Ministry of the Environment we continue to work with many, many stakeholders right across the province to advance our environmental agenda. As the environment becomes a continuing issue of importance to all Ontarians, we look forward to working with Ontarians right across the province, and again, I look forward to having a chance to read your bill.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Ms. Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, over the past three years, our government has built a strong public education system that is supporting student success and raising student achievement.

This, I must say, is a massive contrast to what we saw in the Harris-Eves Tory government that broke and battered our public schools and allowed our students to fail. Instead of working with our students, parents and education partners, instead of pumping up the necessary funds for more resources and more tools that our teachers so desperately needed, instead of supporting schools that were not doing as well as others to help them succeed, they sat idly by with no plan to accelerate student achievement.

The McGuinty government has a plan. It's comprehensive and it's working. We're supporting our students and helping every student reach their full potential. From lowering class sizes in the primary grades straight through to helping more students graduate, we are making student achievement a priority.

Minister, could you please update this House on how the McGuinty government is helping to boost student achievement for every student all across the province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): Thank you to the member for London North Centre for everything that she does for children in this province.

We have made very targeted investments. Quite apart from the restoration of relationships, which I think actually is at the core of the improvements that we've made in the education system, we have made targeted investments in literacy and numeracy for students.

One of the first things we did when we were elected was to establish the literacy and numeracy secretariat. We looked around the world at other jurisdictions and we looked at the practices that were going on in those other jurisdictions, and we came up with a made-in-Ontario plan that included things like specialist teachers, special training for teachers in literacy and numeracy in those early years, \$47 million for new textbooks and learning resources, and training for 1,700 tutors for students in 54 school boards across the province who would actually be able to work with kids.

We're seeing results. If you look at the Thames Valley District School Board and the London Catholic District School Board, grades 3 and 6 reading and math results are up 9% and 6% respectively.

Ms. Matthews: Clearly, while the Harris-Eves Tory government measured failure, we are measuring success, and it is through this measuring of success that we can focus our attention to improve student achievement where it is needed the most. There are certainly challenges that come with this, but we're prepared to meet them, because it's in the best interests of students and it's in our best interests that we do so. We know that every child learns differently, that every child benefits from individual attention, and that there are schools across the province that need specialized resources so they can help each student reach his or her full potential.

Minister, we're committed to providing Ontario schools with proven tools and resources that help kids excel in reading, writing and math. Can you tell us, please, what the McGuinty government has committed to that gives students the extra support they need to reach their full potential?

Hon. Ms. Wynne: The story we've been telling about student achievement has focused on an increase in test scores for those kids in grades 3, 6, and 9, and one of the things that we've done to use those EQAO tests is treated them and made them more explicitly diagnostic tools. One of the problems that people have sometimes with testing is that it's not used as a diagnostic tool, so we've made the reporting times more consistent with teachers' needs to be able to use the results and actually help the kids who are struggling. So what I announced last week, the Ontario-focused intervention partnership, will provide interventions for 750 schools that are facing challenges. We know where those schools are, we know where their students are, and we know that if we put some resources beside those kids in those classrooms, those specific children are going to do well. We're going to hire more tutors and allow school boards to put those interventions in place that will target those students who are having trouble, because we know where they are now and we know where those schools are.

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): A question to the Premier: The federal government's tax fairness plan will allow for income splitting for pension income beginning as soon as January 1, 2007. That will mean, for a couple with one spouse making \$40,000 in pension income and the other none, substantial tax savings of about \$2,500 will result. I'm sure the Premier and the finance minister know that about \$500 will be Ontario's share. There is great concern among seniors that the McGuinty government's appetite for tax hikes and tax increases will be overwhelming. Does the minister actually plan to claw back that \$500, or will you allow seniors to benefit from the new definition of "taxable income"?

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I'm fascinated by the speculation of my friend from Erie-Lincoln on the speculation of the finance minister in Ottawa, about what he might be considering down the road.

I'll simply say to him that we are going to be concentrating on trying to reach an agreement with the federal government where there's further investment in Ontario. As a first step, we're going to look to them to honour the agreement that they made to fund the Canada-Ontario agreement. We're going to be concentrating on a further commitment from the federal government to invest in Ontario's infrastructure, to invest in Ontario's research system, to invest in Ontario's university system. As to the changes provided for seniors, we are going to wait for the details from Mr. Flaherty before we make any further comment on that.

Mr. Hudak: I think the finance minister knows—it was announced some time ago, and it's straightforward—that the definition of "taxable income" is going to change to allow for splitting of that income for pension earners beginning January 1, 2007. This is well known. It's been in the media. I know that finance officials are working

away at how this can be implemented. I think the minister knows, as well, that in order to claw that money back—and I'm afraid Dalton McGuinty wants to do just that—you would have to rip up the tax collection agreement. That would mean that Ontario would be collecting its first set of income taxes on its own since 1962. The minister knows that would be a monumental change, likely involving the hiring of 1,000 more bureaucrats and a new computer system, and then you also have the cost of seniors filing two sets of tax forms. Please tell me that your appetite for higher taxes is not so overwhelming that you're going to make these types of changes just to claw back that money from the hard-working seniors in the province of Ontario.

1450

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: It's quite interesting to see my friend really just scratching at the bottom of the barrel of speculation on an income tax change that the federal minister has announced. There has been absolutely no indication whatever that we are challenging that proposal, that we are going to amend the personal income tax agreement with the federal government, that we are going to make any changes at all. For him to waste valuable time in this question period with that kind of speculation makes no sense to me.

I simply ask him: If he is so interested in the seniors of this province, why did he vote against those budget provisions that we had here that enhanced fair tax treatment for seniors in this province?

BIRTH CERTIFICATES

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a question to the Minister of Government Services. Minister, if a person calls herself Irene, I-r-e-n-e; if the name on her birth certificate since 1965 is Irene, I-r-e-n-e; if her marriage certificate and baptismal certificates identify her as Irene, I-r-e-n-e; and if it's incredibly important that identity documents be accurate for the purpose of acquiring passports and crossing borders, why would your ministry insist that she accept a birth certificate that identifies her as Iren, I-r-e-n?

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): Again, I go back to reinforce what the member said, and that is that these documents are extremely important. We build into our system enormous safeguards. We review those safeguards on a regular basis. We are very cautious on how we go about either issuing a birth certificate or a marriage certificate or amending them.

I would just say to the member that our staff are very cautious about making changes to any of these documents. They want to make sure they have good, solid evidence that the change should take place, so we are cautious. The matter that the member's referring to probably is an individual who's having some difficulty getting a change made. I just say to that individual and to the public: Sometimes it does take time because we are very careful to make certain that any changes we make, we can document and we are making the legitimate

change. If an individual's having difficulty with it, we'll certainly deal with it.

Mr. Kormos: Exactly the point. My hard-working constituency staff have spent hours and hours with your hard-working ministry staff trying to resolve this matter. Ms. Irene Neal, my constituent, is being told that she has to pay for a change of name before you can put her correct name on her birth certificate. She has got extensive documentation, including the original birth certificate, that identifies her as I-r-e-n-e. Why should she have to pay for a change of name? We've spent hours trying to resolve this. Will you please intervene and resolve this matter so that this woman can go on with the rest of the things she has to do?

Hon. Mr. Phillips: I always, on behalf of the public, want to make sure that we are fair to everyone. Again, I would say to the member and the public that these documents are sensitive and important and we are very cautious about making changes. If someone is asking for a name change, we need some assurance that legitimately we should change that name. I think you can appreciate, and certainly the public can appreciate, that if we aren't cautious on making changes like this, we run the risk that individuals end up with documents they shouldn't have.

I would just say to the member, of course I'll look into it. Of course I'll make sure that your constituent is treated fairly. But I will say to the public that we treat these documents very seriously. We make changes only after we're assured that we have the evidence that would support that change. I can't comment publicly on this particular one, but I will look into it.

CYSTIC FIBROSIS

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): My question today is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, today is a special day. As you know, before coming to this place I was very active in raising money to find a cure or control for the leading genetic cause of death in Canadian children: cystic fibrosis. I became aware of this deadly disease through my professional association, Advocis, but it was my initial meeting with a young girl afflicted with CF, Julie Lyons of Stratford, and subsequently her brother Christian and their remarkable family, that inspired me to get involved.

Since coming to this place, I've had the privilege of organizing two days for the wonderful people of the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation here at Queen's Park, with the assistance of the members for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, Beaches-East York and Whitby-Ajax, and I want to thank them, and especially you, Minister, for taking time on both of those days to meet with people with cystic fibrosis.

I want to recognize that Cathleen Morrison, executive director of the foundation, is joining us today in the east gallery. Welcome.

Today's announcement that newborn screening for cystic fibrosis will be added to our now world-class Ontario newborn screening program is very welcome

news. Minister, can you tell me what the benefits are for an infant as a result of the early detection of cystic fibrosis?

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I want to join with the honourable member: I too have had the privilege to be touched by a young man who very recently—this week, in fact—had a double lung transplant, and I'm looking forward to going to see him tomorrow at Sick Kids. I know that many members of the House, of course, have been very actively engaged.

The key point is that through newborn screening we give these kids the best possible start by taking a very fast look at whether they have a genetic disorder, so that we can respond appropriately with a view toward trying to give care at the front end, which has the effect of making other therapies less likely later in life.

What I want to tell members is that while today we've added cystic fibrosis to those things we will test through our newborn screening initiative at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, when we get a positive verification, we've got counselling and clinical follow-up that is wrapped around.

We're working to give our kids the best possible start, and adding cystic fibrosis to the testing for newborn screening is going to be of advantage to many, many more of these children in Ontario.

Mr. Wilkinson: Minister, it's important to show leadership on this front, because it's necessary for government to support our researchers and health care providers as they work toward a cure for cystic fibrosis. As you know, CF researchers working at institutions across Canada have achieved many milestones on the road to a cure for CF, and I know, as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Research and Innovation, that Ontario researchers in particular are viewed as leaders in the global effort to find a cure or an effective control for this dreaded disease.

With developments in research and treatment, young Canadians like Adele and Celia Orr of Stratford in my riding, who live with CF, are living longer, healthier lives, and newborn screening is an important additional step in that direction.

To this end, Minister, can you please explain for this House how today's announcement will further complement progress made in cystic fibrosis research?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Today we had the opportunity to build on a lot of the fantastic research work of homegrown talent. Doctors like Lap-Chee Tsui, Jack Riordan and Francis Collins, with the support of Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children, are credited with the discovery of the gene that leads to CF.

We've also had a tremendous leadership contribution from a well-known gentleman, Dr. Joe Clarke, recently retired, also from Sick Kids, on the importance of newborn screening. Dr. Clarke brought forward the advice that has allowed Ontario to now list all 28 disorders recommended by the American College of Medical Genetics.

I'm really pleased that, building on the kind of research work that's been done here in Toronto and the advice of people like Dr. Joe Clarke from Sick Kids, we've been able in very short order, with support from members on all sides of the House, to take Ontario from worst to first in terms of our capacity to treat newborns. I think this is something we should all share as a proud achievement of the Ontario health care system, made possible by the kind of research that has been going on around here.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): To the Minister of Agriculture: You're aware of the McGuinty strategy of blaming the federal government for everything. However, your leader received 30,000 post-cards asking for provincial support for agriculture and our rural economy, including the risk management program for cash crops. You would be aware of other requests from other farm organizations and commodity groups, asking for income support, whether it be self-directed production insurance or even asking for a return to NISA. Farmers do need a level playing field to compete.

You've just returned from Calgary. You've just come back from a federal/provincial/territorial ministers' meeting. My question: As Ontario's Minister of Agriculture in Calgary, did you fight for RMP, did you fight for self-directed production insurance or the return of NISA? Did you fight for a transformation of the CAIS program?

1500

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I have to say that I'm always happy to talk about the work that we do in the McGuinty government for farmers, the fact that under the leadership of our Premier, we have provided over \$900 million in new dollars. That is in direct support to farmers, because this government values the second-largest industry, the industry that has the greatest impact on rural communities.

With respect to the transformation of CAIS, I'm very happy to report to the honourable member that since coming to office, our government has been working with our provincial colleagues and with the federal government. We've listened very carefully to producers. I think one of the first and most significant actions we took was to replace the requirement for a deposit to participate in CAIS. This was something that farmers told us they wanted. There is a more accurate assessment of losses under the CAIS program, better protection for expanded negative margins. We have done this in consultation with the stakeholders, as well as—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Barrett: Minister, I asked about the Calgary meeting. Are you admitting you're ineffective in dealing with the feds? Taxpayers sent you to that meeting in Calgary. They want to know what you did. Did you pitch

any proposals at all on behalf of Ontario's farmers? There's no news release on your website. Minister, if you didn't pitch any ideas at the Calgary meeting, at least admit it. Admit that you've left farmers out on a limb. Don't embarrass yourself. We don't want to hear about any blame game or finger pointing. Farmers wish to know specifically where you stand. Please put it on the record. What is your position on RMP, the risk management program? What is your position on SDPI? Where do you stand with respect to a return of the CAIS program?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: Since the honourable member asked, I will tell you what Ontario did to fight for Ontario farmers. Before the ministers went to Calgary, we received a framework for the next APF discussions from the federal government. You know what was not included in that framework? There was no component to consult on the risk management program of any kind. There was nothing for income support. So I wrote to the federal minister and I indicated that I wanted to see that as part of the consultation process. I contacted my provincial colleagues and asked them to support me. When we arrived in Calgary, I did gain the support of my provincial colleagues. And I'm happy to report that the federal minister is prepared now to include a component for business risk management, for income support, in the next consultation. That's what Ontario has done for Ontario farmers. We brought the federal government onside to discuss—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

DISABILITY BENEFITS

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Madam Minister, I hope you're listening. Your new special diet rules for disabled Ontarians are unfair, ineffective and, in at least one case, destructive. Brian Woods—you will remember him. You are aware of his circumstance; I've raised it so many times in this Legislature. He has just received his tribunal decision denying him the full amount of food money that he needs to keep out of the hospital. The decision states, in part—I want to read it, because you need to know what your ministry is doing and what you're doing: "The tribunal recognizes that the change in regulations has created hardship for [people like Mr. Woods] and concedes that the present regulations may indeed in some cases be more expensive for the government than the previous method."

Madam Minister, my question is simple: Will you today rescind your rules and substitute fair rules so that disabled Ontarians who need a special diet will begin to receive the proper and just benefits?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I'm very pleased that your constituent got his decision, but as the member knows, I'm not at liberty to speak about special cases here in the House.

But I can tell you that we are very proud of this program. Last year, when we saw a drastic increase in the number of people accessing the special diet allowance, we called for a review of the program. The allowance, as I said in this House previously, has always been intended for people who require a special diet as a result of a medical condition. So as you know, any misuse of social assistance programs jeopardizes those programs for everyone. The need for a special diet must be confirmed by health professionals, and that's what we are enforcing. We have worked with health care professionals, including—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

Mr. Prue: Madam Minister, you talk about misuse. The only thing that is being misused is your authority in these circumstances. Mr. Woods is blind. He is severely diabetic. His body is racked with disease. He's lost 70 pounds. This past Sunday he was admitted to the hospital with an out-of-control foot infection. He is in isolation fighting for his life. If he survives into next week—and that, at this point, we don't know—his leg is going to be amputated. And you speak about misuse.

The decision says—and I've got the decision, and you have it too: "While the tribunal can sympathize with the effect of the change in special diet allowance is having on [Mr. Woods], it must apply the regulation." The adjudicator knows it's wrong, your staff knows it's wrong, you know it's wrong, but you continue to do it, and that man lies dying in a hospital because you choose to do nothing.

My question to you is, why is your government so intent on causing hardship—that's what the adjudicator said, "hardship"—on the most vulnerable disabled persons in our society?

Hon. Mrs. Meilleur: I'd like to clarify what the member of the opposite party is saying. I never said that his constituent misused the program. I'm saying that we have a program that is working well; we have an increase in the demand. For example, in 1998-99 the program was disbursing \$2.9 million; in 2005-06 it's now \$128 million. So we are not preventing anyone who has a medical condition attested by a doctor. They will be provided the service and the benefit, and his client now, his constituent, will also receive the diet allowance as a result of the appeal.

SHELL CANADA EXPANSION

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): I understand that Shell has just recently made a very important announcement for the community of Sarnia, and I know that this is going to be great news for Sarnia and the people of Ontario. Minister, could you please tell us more about this announcement? We are very anxious to hear this.

Hon. Sandra Papatello (Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues): In fact, I had a great opportunity this week to meet with Shell Canada and to talk a little bit

about their planning in eastern Canada, especially in Ontario and in the Sarnia area. I know that the opposition members will be very, very happy to see that Shell Canada announced, at 11:30 today, that they are moving forward with massive expansion. What it means for Ontario is a \$50-million feasibility study for Sarnia and area to look at additional refining capacity right here in Ontario.

What it means to us is that this is yet one more example of companies who have confidence in Ontario, who have confidence in Ontario workers, confidence in what we can do as partners in this community. Congratulations to the Sarnia area, but especially congratulations to Shell Canada for believing in Ontario.

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PETITIONS

LAND TITLES

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads as follows:

"Whereas, in the current environment of an escalating problem of title theft and mortgage fraud, property protections for homeowners are warranted and real measures are necessary to address real estate fraud; and

"Whereas" the "Restore the Deed Act, Bill 136, has passed second reading in the Legislature and has been referred to the standing committee on general government; and

"Whereas, among others, the Restore the Deed Act has four primary benefits:

"Reduce the harm by ensuring that the person who is the rightful owner of the property keeps the property. The innocent buyer or the innocent lender must seek compensation from the land titles assurance fund, as is New Brunswick law;

"Prevent the fraud by restricting access to registration of documents to licensed real estate professionals who carry liability insurance, by requiring notification statements and the freezing of the register, as is Saskatchewan law, and by establishing a system of 'no dealings' where landowners can mark their title, which can only be removed by them using a personal identification number prior to the property being transferred or mortgaged;

"Access to the land titles assurance fund be reformed as a 'fund of first resort' and be operated by an arm's-length board of directors appointed by the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, composed of a broad representation of consumer, real estate industry and law enforcement groups;

"Victims of fraud prior to the enactment of the Restore the Deed Act will be eligible to apply for compensation under the reformed land titles assurance fund; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government's proposed legislation will not get the job done;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to enact the measures to protect homeowners from having their homes stolen as contained in MPP Joe Tascona's Restore the Deed Act."

I support the petition and the thousands of signatures attached.

FAIR ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS

Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): I have a petition entitled "In Support of Skilled Immigrants—Bill 124," and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government is committed to establishing measures that will break down barriers for Ontario newcomers; and

"Whereas these measures will ensure that the 34 regulatory professions in Ontario have admissions and application practices that are fair, clear and open; and

"Whereas these measures will include the establishment of a fairness commissioner and an access centre for internationally trained individuals; and

"Whereas, through providing a fair and equitable system, newcomers will be able to apply their global experience, which will not only be beneficial to their long-term career goals but also to the Ontario economy as a whole;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"That all members of the House support the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006, Bill 124, and work to ensure its prompt passage in the Ontario Legislature."

I agree with the petitioners and ask Eshan Shah to take it to the Clerk.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals ... is a registered charity and private police force autonomously enforcing federal, provincial and municipal animal laws under the provincial animal act without any type of provincial oversight or accountability mechanism in place; and

"Whereas, in 2006, resigned OSPCA director and treasurer Garnet Lasby stated, 'Government, not the humane society, should be in charge of enforcing laws to protect animals and to prosecute offenders'; and

"Whereas, in 1989, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture ... formally requested the province to step in to remove police powers from the OSPCA; and

"Whereas, in 2006, the Ontario Farm Animal Council ... stated, 'The number of questions and complaints from the farm community about specific cases and the current enforcement system continues to increase'; and

"Whereas the Animal Care Review Board, a tribunal staffed by volunteers, is the only OSPCA appeals mechanism available outside the court system; and

"Whereas the OSPCA recently received \$1.8 million from the province and is lobbying for additional long-term stable funding;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly direct the provincial government to ensure that members of the Animal Care Review Board tribunal are adequately trained in accepted provincial farm practices and have some legal training to rule competently on issues brought before them; and

"That the Legislative Assembly direct the provincial government to investigate the resignation of 29 OSPCA directors (including the chair and the treasurer) who in May 2006 urged 'the province to step in and investigate insane abuse and animal cruelty charges'; and

"That the Legislative Assembly direct the provincial government to appoint an ombudsman to investigate allegations of abuses of police powers against the OSPCA."

COMMUNITY MEDIATION

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, supporting community mediation.

"Whereas many types of civil disputes may be resolved through community mediation delivered by trained mediators, who are volunteers working with the parties in the dispute; and

"Whereas Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services has established the Peel Community Mediation Service in 1999 with support from the government of Ontario through the Trillium Foundation, the Rotary Club of Mississauga West and the United Way of Peel, and has proven the viability and success of community mediation; and

"Whereas the city of Mississauga and the town of Caledon have endorsed the Peel Community Mediation Service, and law enforcement bodies refer many cases to the Peel Community Mediation Service as an alternative to a court dispute; and

"Whereas court facilities and court time are both scarce and expensive, the cost of community mediation is very small and the extra expense incurred for lack of community mediation in Peel region would be much greater than the small annual cost of funding community mediation;

"Be it therefore resolved that the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of the Attorney General, support and fund the ongoing service delivery of the Peel Community Mediation Service through Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services."

I will affix my signature to this.

HIGHWAY 26

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the redevelopment of Highway 26 was approved by MPP Jim Wilson and the previous PC government in 1999; and

“Whereas a number of horrific fatalities and accidents have occurred on the old stretch of Highway 26; and

“Whereas the redevelopment of Highway 26 is critical to economic development and job creation in Simcoe–Grey;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Liberal government stop the delay of the Highway 26 redevelopment and act immediately to ensure that the project is finished on schedule, to improve safety for area residents and provide economic development opportunities and job creation in Simcoe–Grey.”

Of course, I agree with and will sign that petition.

FAIR ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle” right here “in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

“Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent, arbitrary and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

“Whereas action by Ontario’s trades and professions could remove many such barriers, but Ontario’s trades and professions have failed to recognize that such structural barriers exist, much less to take action to remove them, and to provide fair, timely, transparent and cost-effective access to trades and professions for new Canadians trained outside Canada;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Ontario Legislative Assembly urge the members of all parties to swiftly pass Bill 124, the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006, and to require Ontario’s regulated professions and trades to review and modify their procedures and qualification requirements to swiftly meet the needs of Ontario’s employers, Ontario’s newcomers and their ... membership, all of whom desperately need the very skills new Canadians bring working for their organizations, for their trades and professions, and for their families.”

I agree wholeheartedly with the petition. I affix my name and give it to page Eshan to bring to the table.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Further petitions? The Chair recognizes the renowned member from Haliburton–Victoria–Brock.

HEALTH PREMIUMS

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): Thank you, renowned Speaker, for that.

“We Call on the Government of Ontario to Eliminate the Health Tax

“To the Parliament of Ontario:

“Whereas, according to the Department of National Defence, there are over 30,000 serving military personnel calling Ontario home; and

“Whereas, according to the most recent census data, there are more than 1.6 million senior citizens over the age of 65 living in Ontario; and

“Whereas the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario plans on eliminating this illegitimate tax for all Ontarians after it forms government in 2007; and

“Whereas, as an interim measure, the illegitimate health tax should be removed from those who protect Canada and those who have built Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, call on the government of Ontario to immediately eliminate the illegitimate health tax, beginning with serving military personnel and senior citizens.”

I’ll give this to page Gloria.

1520

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the parents of St. Paul’s elementary school in Alliston have raised many issues regarding the security, cleanliness and state of repair of their school; and

“Whereas a 2003 condition assessment completed by the Ontario government identified the need for \$1.8 million in repairs to St. Paul’s elementary school; and

“Whereas the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board has approached the Ministry of Education with the intention of having the school deemed prohibitive to repair as they believe the school requires \$2.28 million in repairs, or 84% of the school replacement cost; and

“Whereas there are ongoing concerns with air quality, heating and ventilation, electrical, plumbing, lack of air conditioning and the overall structure of the building, including cracks from floor to ceiling, to name a few;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Minister of Education immediately deem St. Paul’s elementary school prohibitive to repair, secure immediate funding and begin construction of a new facility so that the children of St. Paul’s can be educated in a facility that is secure and offers them the respect and dignity that they deserve.”

I went to this school from kindergarten to grade 8. My mother taught there for 33 years, as I remind people. Still, the government hasn't done anything about it. I've been doing this for over a year now. I wish they'd get on with fixing up St. Paul's.

I give this to page Shannon to bring to the table.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have petitions that have been sent to me by the Service Employees International Union. They read as follows:

"Whereas, in June 2003, Dalton McGuinty said Ontario Liberals are committed to ensuring that nursing home residents receive more personal care each day and will reinstate minimum standards, and inspectors will be required to audit the staff-to-resident ratios; and

"Whereas Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman, in October 2004, said that the Ontario government will not set a specified number of care hours nursing home residents are to receive each day; and

"Whereas Ontario nursing home residents still receive the lowest number of care hours in the Western world; and

"Whereas studies have indicated nursing home residents should receive at least 4.1 hours of nursing care per day; and

"Whereas a coroner's jury in April 2005 recommended the Ontario government establish a minimum number of care hours nursing home residents must receive each day;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario immediately enact a minimum standard of 3.5 hours of nursing care for each nursing home resident per day."

I agree with the petitioners and I've affixed my signature to these.

COMMUNITY MEDIATION

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have a second petition today in support of community mediation.

"Whereas many types of civil disputes may be resolved through community mediation delivered by trained mediators, who are volunteers who work with the parties in the dispute; and

"Whereas Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services established the Peel Community Mediation Service in 1999 with support from the government of Ontario through the Trillium Foundation, the Rotary Club of Mississauga West and the United Way of Peel, and has proven the viability and success of community mediation; and

"Whereas the city of Mississauga and the town of Caledon have endorsed the Peel Community Mediation Service, and law enforcement bodies refer many cases to

the Peel Community Mediation Service as an alternative to a court dispute; and

"Whereas court facilities and court time are both scarce and expensive, the cost of community mediation is very small and the extra expense incurred for the lack of community mediation in Peel region would be much greater than the small annual cost of funding community mediation;

"Be it therefore resolved that the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of the Attorney General, support and fund the ongoing service delivery of the Peel Community Mediation Service through Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services."

I'll affix my signature to it and give it to page Philip.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): Speaker, before you get to orders of the day, I would like to rise, pursuant to standing order 55, if that's okay, because I'd like to give the Legislature the business of the House for next week. This is the highlight of my week, I want you to know, Speaker.

On Monday, November 27, in the afternoon, third reading of Bill 65, Mortgage Brokerages, Lenders and Administrators Act; in the evening, second reading of Bill 158, Public Service of Ontario Statute Law Amendment Act.

On Tuesday, November 28, in the afternoon, we'll have an opposition day moved by the official opposition; in the evening, second reading of Bill 155, Electoral System Referendum Act.

On Wednesday, November 29, we'll have third reading of Bill 52, Education Statute Law Amendment Act (Learning to Age 18); in the evening, second reading of Bill 140, Long-Term Care Homes Act.

On Thursday, November 30, in the afternoon, second reading of Bill 62, Election Statute Law Amendment Act.

I'd ask one of the pages to come forward and give that to the table, please.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): Before I call the order, I'd like to seek unanimous consent—I do believe we have it—to move a motion without notice concerning this afternoon's debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Do we have unanimous consent? Yes, there is. Proceed.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I thank my colleagues for the unanimous consent.

I move that, for the purpose of this afternoon's debate on the motion for third reading of Bill 50, up to 50 minutes be allotted to each recognized party, and that

when the time allotted for debate has expired, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the bill and the Speaker shall then adjourn the House without question put.

The Acting Speaker: Is there consent for this motion? Agreed.

TRADITIONAL CHINESE
MEDICINE ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR LES PRATICIENS
EN MÉDECINE TRADITIONNELLE
CHINOISE

Mr. Smitherman moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 50, An Act respecting the regulation of the profession of traditional Chinese medicine, and making complementary amendments to certain Acts / *Projet de loi 50, Loi concernant la réglementation de la profession de praticienne ou de praticien en médecine traditionnelle chinoise et apportant des modifications complémentaires à certaines lois.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): The Chair recognizes the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Applause.

Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Thank you, to the whip, for your extraordinary applause.

I want to say right from the beginning what a privilege it is to be here today to speak about this bill. I will inform members from other parties that I'm the only speaker who is going to be up on this, but I want to acknowledge that among all of my colleagues, the member from Ottawa Centre was hoping that he would have a chance but needed to be back in Ottawa today. He is an example, but only one, of a wide variety of investment, if you will, of important time and energy that a lot of members from all sides have made to bring this bill forward today. I want to say, right from the get-go, that we are very appreciative for their efforts.

Several of my caucus colleagues got this ball rolling, if you will, when they spent a considerable amount of time listening to the various points of view that were there and helping to give advice. That advice was brought forward in the form of a bill which has been, as a result of good process and committee work, amended in a fashion that I think is very positive indeed.

We don't always manage to send a message from this place, in tone or otherwise, that we have worked well together, but I am sincerely appreciative for the efforts that have been made, as I said, by members on all sides. I'm pleased to have here for the debate today the critics for health from the two opposition parties.

I want to welcome the traditional Chinese medicine community to the galleries today. It has been very, very exciting, I must say, to see the extent to which so many people have been engaged in this debate. It is not surprising; indeed, it's entirely appropriate, given that the

issue at hand is one that is of very decided importance to so many.

I stand before you and concede that I am among those who have been the beneficiaries of acupuncture services—in my case, and this will be controversial to some, delivered to me alongside care from a physiotherapist. The point is that we know that thousands and thousands of Ontarians, on a daily basis, gain benefit and support from the work that is done by practitioners of traditional Chinese medicine.

We know too, from scares that have been well presented in places like Quebec, that there have been safety concerns raised related to the provision of acupuncture services. We think it's important to move forward in a fashion that, for the first time since 1991—and just pause for one second to consider the historic moment we are on the cusp of. We are very, very close, not presuming but anticipating the support from members on all sides, that soon Ontario will have, for the first time since 1991, minted, brought to life, a brand new regulated health profession. This is something that we very much celebrate. In a certain sense, another way to say that is that we are here today—the Legislature of Ontario is here—and we are joining together to acknowledge that traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture are an important part of our health care system. We do so in response to the reality that is well known; that is, many of our constituents are gaining benefit from these services.

1530

Regulation is the recognition that this is a profession that provides a contribution to keeping our Ontarians healthy. We thank all of those who are involved in that, and we send them a message from here today that we are profoundly respectful of the role they play. That is why we have spent this time and energy.

For people who follow legislative debate, I think they will see, as I said off the top, that there is proof in this bill of the capacity that when we commit and dedicate ourselves to working well together, we can make progress together. Evidence of this is to be found, as an example, in the work that went on at committee: efforts made by members on all sides doing very, very great diligence. We saw that, in the preparation for committee work, a series of amendments was tabled and brought forward from all three parties. In fact, in several areas all three parties brought forward amendments that were very similar. Again, I think this is a sign that people listened very carefully to the concerns that were raised.

What I propose to do for the balance of my time, which will not be all 45 minutes, is to address on point those alterations that were made through the committee process; that is, the alterations that were made to bring this bill back to this chamber in an improved form. Again, I thank everybody for their work.

We know forthright that acupuncturists were very, very concerned that they were not receiving adequate recognition, so we changed the name of the college to the College of Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners and Acupuncturists of Ontario. This is consistent with the Medicine Act, which includes the two protected titles of

physician and surgeon. Again, it's an example of how, when we listen well, we're able to move forward in a fashion that enhances the bill.

We know there was concern about granting the title of doctor with no accompanying controlled acts—"controlled acts" is another way of saying "scope of practice"—so we've added specific controlled acts that bring much more relevance to the granting of the title of doctor. The two acts were as follows: First, the controlled act to perform acupuncture. This gives the authority to perform acupuncture in the proposed TCM act, rather than through an exemption in the Regulated Health Professions Act.

The second is the controlled act of a TCM diagnosis using TCM techniques. We recognize that TCM does not view illness in exactly the same context as western medicine. That, I think, is a strong reason why so many people support it either as their primary form of medicine or as one that is complementary. Nevertheless, this particular controlled act gives the authority to the college to communicate a TCM diagnosis that respects their view of the body as an integrated and dynamic energy system.

What I really want to herald here is that it is not every day in western environments that we move forward with the adoption of techniques that have been so deeply and profoundly influenced by different philosophies. That's why I think we should be so proud. We speak very often in our province—as Ontarians, we brag a little uncharacteristically about the extent to which our communities have evolved to be so dynamic because of their diversity. It's appropriate that the floor of this Legislature, which has played a role for such a long period of time, be a place where we bring forward motions and legislation that reflect the nature of the way that our province has evolved. Not all regulated health professionals practise acupuncture, as it is not in their scope of practice. So we amended the Regulated Health Professions Act to list only those colleges whose members currently employ acupuncture within their practice. Another way of saying this is, we've listened carefully to the concern that any regulated health profession would be able to start to have acupuncture services on offer, and instead we have grandfathered right in the legislation: only those current regulated health professions that are in the business, if you will, of providing acupuncture services. This has been an important recognition, again, to the concerns that did come forward as we listened carefully in response to the bills.

These colleges will now also have to set their standards and qualifications for acupuncture. Acupuncture—we have to be clear on this: while it is one word, there are different ways in which it's used among the different regulated health professions. We think it's crucial, and we're very, very set on this, that different colleges are able to collaborate when procedures overlap.

I know that there is a concern about the equality, if you will, of the standard related to the use of acupuncture, and we agreed that it's very necessary that the various colleges work in a fashion which is collaborative. It's our anticipation that that will most certainly be the

case. That is why I signalled at committee that I will refer that very specific issue to HPRAC. We think this is area where we would benefit from some further advice. Again, we've heard the concern, we've sought to address it substantially in the legislation, but we believe that there is more that we can do to address this, and that's why we're going to ask HPRAC to assist us even further.

It's a pretty exciting time for traditional Chinese medicine and for acupuncture. If passed, Bill 50 would hand over the reins to the transitional council to make the decisions that will shape the future of TCM and acupuncture. On this point, I think it's incredibly important to acknowledge that many, many people will be called upon to work very vigorously to bring this new college to life. I know that my critic from the third party had the privilege of being part of a government that did such substantial work and amendment to the regulated health professions. Subsequent colleges came to life, and they have a lot of experience around it. We know from talking to the people who have been involved in these things before, these are not decisions or actions to take lightly. This is a substantial step forward, and it will require many people to work very hard. In recognizing that they will do so, we want to acknowledge that forthrightly and to thank them for it. They will decide who will be grandfathered into the college, based on criteria that they set.

I want to stop on that point for just a moment. I know that any time there's a change in the air, it's hard. Change is difficult. And sometimes when we hear that change is coming, our automatic reaction is to steel ourselves, to become tense or perhaps to have an inclination towards defending. The point here is that we are bringing to life a new college. A college is another way of saying self-governance. We are going to provide the tools for traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture practitioners to make decisions about how their very profession evolves.

So I want to say to those who are long-standing traditional practitioners who have had some concern that their experience perhaps sometimes stands in greater stead than their formal education. This is my real world. I'm very familiar with that circumstance. My point here is, we're very sensitive to those issues. And the college, as it comes to life, must be so. It will be the college that can make decisions about whether exams, as an example, would be offered in how many languages or dialects. These are the kinds of decisions that self-governance and the college are going to have the opportunity to grapple with.

We think this is an appropriate signal about our expectations and our sense of the capacity, the maturity, if you will, of these practitioners to build their own college together. We know that there will be many, many hard decisions that are to be taken because this is a very substantial move forward. We recognize that. They will determine which specialities will be necessary so that TCM can grow. Tuina massage and herbal remedies play an integral part in TCM. It will be up to the transitional

council to determine if and how they will become specialties of TCM.

1540

In the last 10 minutes, I have had a chance to highlight some of the amendments—"improvements" is a better way to put it—that have been made possible as a result of the work of members in here. I want to send a signal one more time, really a word of thanks, to the members in here who have grasped the challenges in this bill and given us advice about how to improve it. I thank them.

To the people from the community, many of whom have been so dedicated to this issue and who have been here on a regular basis and who have been available to us to give us advice, we are so grateful for your willingness on behalf of the broad array of practitioners and especially on behalf those, I'm sure, hundreds of thousands of patients who are taking advantage of these services—we are so grateful for their passion and for their willingness to move this forward.

I'm one of those who believes that our country is great and made greater all the time by our willingness to be influenced by other experiences. If I look to my own riding, where we stand today, on any building, street corner or neighbourhood you will see that the whole world has come together in one place. Accordingly, it is appropriate today in this Legislature of Ontario that we move forward as the second jurisdiction in Canada, and one of decidedly few, to say that we will create the circumstances to allow a College of Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners and Acupuncturists of Ontario to come to life, giving it the formal acknowledgment in law that the people of Ontario, by the droves, have already sent a signal that they respect.

This is about respect, and it is on that note that I want to say one more time to all of those who have worked so hard so far, thank you. We will move this bill forward and, in so doing, we will ask many who have already worked so hard to do that much more as they bring a new college to life and, as the opportunities for self-governance flourish, we will do so in a fashion that is respectful of this profoundly beautiful tradition and service. We recognize that its roots go back a long, long way, and we recognize as well the very clear distinction between these practices and some of the more traditional forms of Western medicine.

I give my assurance to all who are interested in this debate that for our government's part, we will ensure that as we move forward it is in a fashion that builds on the successes that we've achieved, which is listening carefully to concerns and doing our utmost to address those on point. So to all those who have done so much to get us to this point today, I close by saying one more time, thank you so very much.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I'm very pleased to join the debate today on behalf of the PC caucus and our leader John Tory, on Bill 50, An Act respecting the regulation of the profession of traditional

Chinese medicine, and making complementary amendments to certain Acts.

This act, as we've heard, reflects that need to recognize a widely used form of complementary and alternative health care. I want to also, on behalf of John Tory and my caucus, thank the hundreds—and they are in the hundreds and hundreds—of people who have come together to send us e-mails and make presentations in committee.

There was a lot of strong feeling about different issues within the bill. At the end of the day, obviously, we had a chance to put forward amendments, as did the third party and the government. Although not all of the wishes of those people who had concerns have been addressed, I do believe that at the end of the day the amended bill does address some of the key concerns that were brought forward to our committee.

Notwithstanding the concerns that we still have about those issues that still need to be addressed, and certainly the need to reflect the concerns of those individuals, I will say that today we will be supporting this bill.

I want to, as I say, thank all those who came forward. I am very pleased that the amendment to change the name of the college was made and that we are now going to formally recognize acupuncture.

This bill has been in the making for a long time. The first request was made in 1994. When I was Minister of Health, the issue came up again and we sent it back to HPRAC, and it came back to our government in 2001. It was at that time that we received the final report and advice from HPRAC. I will deal a little bit more with that at another point in time. However, we're pleased that finally, although it has been a long process, we are where we are today, because it will give some feeling of assurance to people in Ontario that they will be receiving services that are regulated and are safe, and the quality of health will be protected.

Having said that, I want to mention that just recently, within the last hour or so, I did receive this pile of faxes from individuals who continue to have concerns about the legislation. I also want to tell you that there are a lot of submissions here from people who are being treated who credit their doctor with having an impact on the treatment that they're receiving. I think it points out that the treatment is widespread throughout the province of Ontario. Here's someone who is being treated for hypertension and arrhythmia; someone who's being treated for rheumatoid arthritis; someone who's being treated for a brain tumour; somebody here from Moncton; somebody here being treated for Crohn's disease; another cancer patient.

The interesting thing is that this is an alternative form of medicine that is being very, very widely used. I would also say that the people who have written to us, although they have some concerns in the bill about the bill in its present form, do come from different parts of the province of Ontario. There's one here from Toronto; I said Moncton; there's another one here from Toronto—what else did I see?—Huron county here; another one from Toronto; here's one from Kincardine. So I think you can

see that many, many people throughout Ontario are recognizing that traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture can be very beneficial to their treatment and the way they feel.

Let me go back to the HPRAC recommendations of 2001 that were received by our government. They did recommend to the minister that the profession of traditional Chinese medicine be regulated with a distinct scope of practice and four controlled acts authorized to the profession, which included communicating a TCM diagnosis, performing a procedure on tissue below the dermis for the purpose of acupuncture, prescribing and dispensing natural health products and prescribing, dispensing and compounding Chinese herbal remedies.

Bill 50, in its original form, did not deal with these recommendations. In fact, even today the bill as written doesn't address the scope of practice in the same way as was originally recommended. In its first draft, Bill 50 didn't include authorization for any controlled acts to the profession. So we are certainly very pleased to say that after input from many stakeholders from the opposition parties, the government did agree to address the shortcomings by authorizing two of the mentioned controlled acts to the profession. However, some of the other key amendments have still been left out.

We did advocate very strongly for public hearings. I think it's obvious that as a result of having public hearings, the bill has been strengthened; the bill has been improved. So I think it demonstrates that public hearings are very important to making sure that you have the best bill you possibly can, despite the fact that there are still those who have some very, very strong reservations and concerns about the legislation.

When we were listening to the people who came forward on Bill 50, there emerged some very clear issues that the presenters and those they represented had with this piece of legislation. They did say that the scope of practice was too vague; they did say that a more distinctive scope was needed. They talked about the absence of access to any controlled acts. There was certainly a lot of concern about the different standards of practice among health professions for acupuncture.

1550

Let's talk about the standards of practice for acupuncture. This is an issue that was brought to our attention by many of the presenters who appeared before us, and people certainly had different solutions. There were several different approaches that were presented to us to address this issue of concern regarding minimum standards. But at the end of the day, we overwhelmingly heard that the World Health Organization's guidelines of a minimum 200 hours of training for acupuncture were perhaps as appropriate as any. These guidelines were reflected in the amendments that we brought forward during clause-by-clause.

This issue still remains to be addressed. The minister touched on it today. We did receive a memo from the minister. Regrettably, we didn't receive it until November 7, which was the same day that amendments from all parties were due to the clerk. But the minister did write to

tell us that in his view "there is a potential opportunity for regulated health professions that have overlapping scopes of practice to work together to develop standards of practice in a collaborative way." I assume that the minister is referring to acupuncture, as he later writes that "this issue has been raised by some presenters during the hearings on Bill 50," although nowhere in the letter does he ever specifically mention acupuncture. He does indicate that HPRAC "recently provided extensive recommendations on a number of complex regulatory issues in its New Directions report. Some of its recommendations posed options for the health professions to collaborate in the development of standards of practice for the same or similar controlled acts, while respecting the competencies of the individual professions." That letter we received from the minister was our first indication that the government may have been trying to correct some of their oversights in drafting the bill and that they were going to revisit the controlled acts for TCM.

Finally the minister writes, "I intend to seek further advice from HPRAC concerning these matters, and how best to facilitate their collaboration." I hope that is indeed the case. At any time when you're creating a new college and you're taking a look at these issues, you obviously need to do what is in the best interests of the public. There is a need for extensive dialogue between ministry officials and the regulatory health colleges. Obviously, there is a lot of work to be done. This memo that we got from the minister, however, did not say that he was indeed going to make referral to HPRAC or when any of this might happen. So to this day, we're left wondering when this might happen.

I want to briefly talk about some of the outstanding issues with Bill 50 that people have continued to tell us are of concern to them. As I say, the controlled acts: We and all parties did bring forward an amendment that spoke about the ability to communicate the diagnosis, and it's an important one when we consider that the bill allows qualified members of the new college to use the "doctor" title. If you take look at the five professions that currently are entitled to use the "doctor" title under the RHPA, they are all authorized to perform the controlled act of communicating a diagnosis. To not allow TCM doctors access to this controlled act would be inconsistent. Of course, in 2001, the HPRAC report did recommend that a controlled act of communicating a diagnosis be authorized in the new college. This is also consistent with the regulation of TCM and acupuncture in British Columbia. This amendment was supported by the presenters: the Toronto School of Traditional Chinese Medicine, the Ontario Association of Acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine and the Ontario Acupuncture Examination Committee.

The other amendment that speaks to the controlled acts was also brought forward by all three parties—I think you can see that people did work very hard together in order to make sure this bill could be the best that it was going to be—an amendment to allow performing of this procedure on tissue below the dermis and below the sur-

face of a mucous membrane for the purpose of acupuncture.

If we go back to the 2001 HPRAC report, there was a conclusion there that there is risk of harm from acupuncture and that this risk has gained significance given the increasing use of acupuncture by Ontarians and the variety of health providers who today perform acupuncture. Of course, British Columbia also authorizes a similar reserved act to its TCM college members. As the bill was originally drafted, however, acupuncture was treated only as a modality. It didn't recognize the risk of harm associated with this modality. So we are glad that this amendment was introduced.

If we take a look at another controlled act—to prescribe, dispense or compound Chinese herbal medicines and natural health products—this is supported when we look at the model in British Columbia. They also include “traditional Chinese medicine herbalist” as a protected title. Unfortunately, our amendment on this one was defeated during clause-by-clause. I know that there are some concerns that remain, based on input that we have received from stakeholders.

There are stakeholders in the province who have said to us that even with the amended legislation, they do not believe that the public is going to be properly protected or properly regulated. The minister has said that many of these issues of outstanding concern will be addressed by the transitional college. It would be my hope that that is indeed going to be the case. I think the transitional college is going to have its work cut out for it because there are many unresolved issues. There continues to be a lot of anxiety and angst among those who do practise acupuncture or Chinese medicine in the province. So we need to make sure that some of those anxieties are put to rest earlier as opposed to later.

Mary Wu, the president of the Toronto School of Traditional Chinese Medicine, is concerned about the lack of addressing the issue of Chinese herbal medicine. She writes that some “are very potent and toxic.” She says, “For example, concerning pregnancy, improper uses of Chinese herbal medicine without TCM diagnosis may cause severe adverse reactions,” and she goes on to speak to those. She makes reference to the BC act as well. I think that is important. Unfortunately, our amendment to allow access to that controlled act was not supported.

Another outstanding issue—again, Mary Wu, president of the Toronto School of Traditional Chinese Medicine—was around the whole issue of tuina massage. This is an issue that was not addressed. There was some desire on the part of individuals to add the title of “tuina therapist” to Bill 50, and that didn't happen.

When we take a look at acupuncture, there are still some concerns about the standards of practice and public safety that have been expressed to us. We heard from the Toronto School of Traditional Chinese Medicine that, in their 10 years of serving people in this province, they've had over 2,000 inquiries for their programs. They say that over 90% of the individuals who are health professionals are looking for short crash courses and that fewer than

10% of the people are serious about acupuncture and registered in the diploma program of over 2,000 hours. This concern remains about the standards of practice and protection of public safety. They still feel the amended Bill 50 is too loose. It still leaves the door open to 10 health professions without any control at the legislative level. They're concerned it will create multiple standards of acupuncture practice.

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Grandfathering: The issue of grandfathering of course has come up. There was a desire on the part of those who appeared before us that grandfathering those who have been practising acupuncture for a long period of time with adequate and safe records and who meet the professional standards with proved knowledge, skills and judgment through assessment or examinations occur.

Some of the other people who wrote in about that or talked to us about that were the Canadian Society of Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture, the Canadian Association of Acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine, the Canadian Society of Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture, the Committee for Certified Acupuncturists of Ontario, the Ontario Acupuncture Association, the Ontario Guild of Traditional Chinese Medicine and the Ontario Coalition for the Unbiased Regulation of Traditional Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture. These are all groups that have expressed some concerns over the standards of practice for acupuncture among the regulated health professions.

But the minister has indicated today, and I trust the minister is going to follow through, his intent to refer this entire issue of minimum standards of practice to HPRAC for their advice.

I guess at the end of the day a lot of people did come forward to express their reservations, their concerns, to offer their changes to the bill. Despite the fact that obviously not all of the issues have been addressed, the bill in its amended form does allow for us to move forward to the creation of this new college. It will mean that people in the province of Ontario, for the first time now, will start to be protected and will be able to have some confidence in the quality and safety of the treatments. So, although it's not what everybody would like it to be, certainly it moves us forward as far as safety is concerned and in the protection of the public. On behalf of our caucus, I want to reiterate that I appreciate the hard work of so many people. The ministry staff, I know, worked very hard on this bill. I have to congratulate Richard Patten. In speaking to him, I know he was very responsive to the concerns that we brought forward and to the amendments. We will be supporting this bill, and I congratulate the people who have been working on the creation of this new college since 1994.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): It's a pleasure for me to participate in the debate this afternoon. At the outset, I'd like to thank several people who helped myself and the rest of the members during the committee process. They include: Philip Kaye, our researcher; Trevor Day, the committee clerk who scheduled all of the presentations; Ralph Armstrong, who did my amend-

ments and was also part of the legal counsel at the committee during the clause-by-clause; Christine Henderson, counsel from the Ministry of Health; Stephen Cheng, senior policy analyst from the Ministry of Health; and Tim Blakley, manager of regulatory programs unit from the Ministry of Health. All of these people did a great deal of work to assist the committee during the Bill 50 deliberations, and I want to thank them for the work they did.

I also want to thank the many people and organizations who came out to the committee hearings. It was a very short time schedule. People really had to rearrange their schedule in order to participate, and some of those folks are in the gallery today. I want to thank those people who came out, because I think as a result of people coming out, because of some of the concerns that were expressed, the government did have to move two amendments that they might not have otherwise, because certainly there are changes now in the new bill that weren't in place in the old bill. I think a great deal of that has to do with the fact that people took the time, came out, expressed both their support and their concerns, and the government was forced to respond. Indeed, all three of the political parties put forward amendments in some cases that were very similar to try to respond to those concerns.

Finally, there have been a number of people involved for a number of years in the effort to have regulation of TCM and acupuncture, and I want to thank them. As a member of a government that was involved in the regulation of a number of health professionals, I support regulation, both for the public safety aspect it brings, but also the clear recognition it brings that the health care services provided by that particular professional are important to Ontario's health care system. I remain very supportive of that and look forward, at the end of the day, to seeing another profession regulated, because we indeed will be supporting this legislation.

This afternoon, I want to review some of the concerns I raised at second reading and talk about how the government responded to those, and also some of the other areas that I continue to believe both HPRAC and the new college are going to have to address.

Let me go back to second reading and begin in this way. I recognize that acupuncture is not a controlled act and right now anybody can practise acupuncture. What the government was attempting to do was control who practises acupuncture. The government offered that provision up in section 18, which essentially allowed all the regulated health professionals in the province to provide acupuncture, both in accordance with the standard of practice of that profession and within the scope of practice of that profession.

There were a couple of problems with this, which I identified during the course of second reading. Number one, it's really difficult to look at the scope of practice of some of the professions and figure out if they can provide acupuncture. Frankly, acupuncture doesn't appear in the scope of practice of any of these regulated health professions. You have to dig much deeper into policies and

other things within each of the individual acts that regulate those health care professionals to try to make some kind of determination about who is most qualified and in the best position to practise acupuncture. So maybe it wasn't such a good idea to talk about scope of practice in the legislation, because it was—I don't want to use the word "misleading," because that's not the way it should be taken, but it was very difficult to use that and understand who could provide acupuncture.

I think the second problem I saw was that those regulated health professionals could provide acupuncture within the standard of practice of the profession, and it was very clear that the standard of practice of those regulated health professions currently providing acupuncture varied quite dramatically. Some colleges have very well-developed, very fulsome standards of practice; others are not so well developed or fulsome. So there was a wide variety in terms of the standards each college expected its members to meet in order to safely provide acupuncture. My argument has always been that if I, as consumer, am going to receive acupuncture from a TCM practitioner, a chiropractor, a physiotherapist, then I have a right to know what the minimum standard is in terms of the qualification of that health care professional as they provide me that service. That is matter of public safety that I feel very strongly about.

That, really, was what I raised during the course of my second reading debate. The idea of what the minimum standard should be was a point of great debate during the course of the public hearings. I'll deal with that in terms of how the government tried to respond to it.

The second concern I raised had to do with the doctor title and access to controlled acts. The original Bill 50, as drafted, said very clearly that the college would determine the qualifications of those who would be able to obtain or achieve the doctor title, but even if they did obtain the doctor title they wouldn't have any access to controlled acts. It seemed very strange to me that other professionals who have achieved a doctor title—doctors themselves, chiropractors, etc.—have access to some of the controlled acts, and yet doctors of TCM would have access to none. From my perspective, at least, what was the point of having the doctor title if there wasn't any kind of controlled act that flowed from it? It seemed rather bizarre to grant a title and not grant access to any controlled act. I raised that concern, and again the government had to deal with that during the course of the public hearings.

I raised concerns about grandfathering provisions—how that is structured—because we want to take into account the expertise of those who have been practising for many years and we need to recognize that the provisions have to reflect the many years they have practised and provided service to the community. Then we have to be sensitive about how we do that.

1610

Fourth, I raised concerns about the language to be used in exams. We need to look beyond English and French. We need to be looking at Chinese and potentially other languages that people are able to take their

licensing exams in if we are not going to really limit or prohibit those who currently provide an excellent service from actually being able to continue to do that.

Finally, I raised the question during the course of second reading as to whether or not we should be looking at a distinction in the legislation between acupuncture performed by the TCM community and acupuncture performed by other regulated health professions in the context of pain management. I asked the question whether or not it was necessary to have a definition perhaps around adjunct acupuncture, to make that distinction between those who practise acupuncture as part of a TCM model, which from my perspective is quite different from those who practise acupuncture as part of their other practice, be it physiotherapy, be it chiropractic, as a form of pain management for their patients. Again, we heard a fair bit about that at public hearings.

Let me deal with the clause-by-clause and the changes that came about as a result of the presentations that were heard by all of us. Firstly, the question of who should be permitted to practise acupuncture and how we try to ensure that there are minimum standards they have to meet in order to practise acupuncture. During the public hearings I asked the Ministry of Health—because I remain convinced that the original language in the bill made it clear that all 23 regulated health professions could practise—to come back to the committee and tell us which professions in their opinion were the most likely, in terms of their scope of practice and standard of practice, to be able to provide acupuncture. The ministry came back with a list that included chiropody, chiropractic, dentistry, massage therapy, medicine, nursing, occupational therapy and physiotherapy.

As a result of getting some clarification around who were the most likely regulated health professionals to be in a position to provide acupuncture, both ourselves and the Liberals in fact moved forward amendments that essentially put in a restriction about who could provide acupuncture. I just want to deal with the amendment that we placed, and then I'll deal with the Liberal amendment. But I want to explain some of what we were after or trying to achieve in the amendment we put forward.

Our amendment around section 18 said the following: "A person who is a member of the following colleges is exempt from subsection 27(1) of the act for the purpose of performing adjunct acupuncture in accordance with the standard of practice of the profession, within the scope of practice of the profession, and in accordance with the regulations on the minimum standards to safely perform adjunct acupuncture as established by the Lieutenant Governor in Council and enforced by the college."

We listed those eight professions that the ministry had said to us were the most likely to be in a position to perform acupuncture. Those included: College of Chiropractors of Ontario, College of Chiropractors of Ontario, College of Massage Therapists of Ontario, College of Nurses of Ontario, College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario, College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario,

College of Physiotherapists of Ontario, and the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario.

During the course of the debate it became clear that the College of Physicians and Surgeons—the Medicine Act has particular provisions in it that don't allow it to become part of the schedule. I don't pretend to know all the legalese about that. I accepted the government at its word that there was a reason why medicine would not end up in the schedule. So the government schedule that was agreed upon has only seven of the eight that we proposed.

In our amendment I also tried to make some distinction between acupuncture provided by regulated health professionals and acupuncture provided by TCM practitioners. I talked about adjunct acupuncture but also went on to provide a definition of that a little later on in the same amendment. I'll get to that in just one second.

I also made it very clear that it's the college that has to enforce the standards etc. We heard a couple of times during the course of the hearings that there are a number of people who may go for additional training, and those things are very good, but there's not really a mechanism right now to ensure that they complete that training. So the individual colleges have to be responsible to ensure that the standards they set out in terms of qualifications and practice have to be met before they allow one of their members to practise acupuncture.

I said in this regard in terms of adjunct acupuncture, "adjunct acupuncture" means a procedure on tissue below the dermis for the purpose of acupuncture pain relief in conjunction with other modalities such as western medicine, physiotherapy and chiropractic adjustment according to human anatomy and physiology."

Our amendment was voted down, but what was interesting is that there were some similarities between ours and the Liberal amendment in terms of trying to respond to the concerns that we heard raised during the course of the public hearings. Let me work backwards through those.

Our last point in terms of our amendment was talking about enforcement by the college and why I thought that was necessary. The Liberal amendment, as it was voted on, makes it very clear that it will be the college that will have to set the standards and the qualifications, and the college will have to enforce that. So in subsection (4) it says, "A person mentioned in subsection (2) or (3) is exempt from subsection 27(1) of the act for the purpose of performing acupuncture only if he or she has met the standards and qualifications set by the college or the Board of Directors of Drugless Therapy, as the case may be." The second part is, of course, to refer to naturopaths.

I think there wasn't much difference between what we were trying to do and what the government ended up doing, which is to make sure that the college has a very singular, important role to play to ensure that qualifications of their members are met in terms of practising acupuncture and being allowed to practise acupuncture.

Secondly, with respect to adjunct acupuncture, it's interesting that Mr. Patten, who led this on behalf of the Liberals, said he quite liked my definition but the legal

advice that came back from the Ministry of Health was that we could not use such a definition of adjunct acupuncture; because it didn't have a definition in practice, it might present some restrictions etc. So all right; I live with that. But I think the way the government ended up trying to do what I was trying to do in the first place, although not quite as far in terms of having a distinct definition—I think the government was forced to move some way to try to provide a distinction between acupuncture provided by TCM practitioners and that provided by other regulated health professionals. The government does that in their amendment essentially through section 3.1 of the bill, where they say the following:

"In the course of engaging in the practice of traditional Chinese medicine, a member is authorized, subject to the terms, conditions and limitations imposed on his or her certificate of registration, to perform ... a procedure on tissue below the dermis and below the surface of a mucous membrane for the purpose of performing acupuncture."

So that's what appears in section 3.1, and the important points there are saying "engaging in the practice of traditional Chinese medicine" and the enhanced definition of acupuncture, which is "a procedure on tissue below the dermis" but also "and below the surface of a mucous membrane."

If you go back to the Liberal change in section 18, you will see that in terms of talking about acupuncture with respect to the other regulated health professions, the government doesn't have such an expanded definition of acupuncture. The government doesn't reference TCM, in terms of within the practice of TCM. In terms of who in the regulated health professions can provide acupuncture, the government says, "a person who is a member of a college listed in column 1 of the table is exempt from subsection 27(1) of the act for the purpose of performing acupuncture, a procedure performed on tissue below the dermis, in accordance with the standard of practice and within the scope of practice of the health profession...."

So in terms of regulated health professionals, the definition around acupuncture has been limited and there's no reference whatsoever to undertaking acupuncture while engaging in the practice of traditional Chinese medicine. I think that's how the government got at this in a way that was different than mine, but I think it is clear now that there is some distinction that is important between acupuncture that will be provided by TCM practitioners and acupuncturists, and that acupuncture that will be provided by other regulated health professionals in the course of providing pain management.

Third is the important issue of the minimum standards. In our amendment, we made it very clear that we thought the Lieutenant Governor in Council, through regulation, should set the minimum standard. That was our way to try and ensure that as consumers we could be assured that someone had met certain qualifications if they were going to be allowed to practise acupuncture. So we said that they had to do all that, but in accordance with any

regulations around acupuncture that were established by the government.

1620

The government did this in a bit of a different way. The government, in subsection 18(4) of the bill says, "A person mentioned in subsection (2) or (3) is exempt from subsection 27(1) of the act for the purpose of performing acupuncture only if he or she has met the standards and qualifications set by the college or the board of directors of drugless therapy,..."

There was quite a discussion about what this meant. The discussion around this came up in the context of the letter that had been sent to the committee members by the minister while we were in the process of submitting our amendments. The government has said very clearly that it's going to be the colleges, and not the government, that set the minimum standards, but I think the government was forced to admit that they needed to go further here to respond to the concerns. That resulted in the minister sending us a letter saying very clearly that he was going to refer this matter to HPRAC. I just want to read into the record some of that letter. I'm quoting from the minister's letter of November 7 to the committee with respect to New Directions in HPRAC:

"Some of its recommendations posed options for the health professions to collaborate in the development of standards of practice for the same or similar controlled acts, while respecting the competencies of the individual professions. I intend to seek further advice from HPRAC concerning these matters, and how best to facilitate that collaboration.

"This has been an issue raised by some presenters during the hearings on Bill 50 and has been a topic of discussion among ministry officials and the health regulatory colleges. I look forward to HPRAC's analysis of the issue in the best interest of the public and Ontario's health care system."

We raised the minister's letter during the course of the clause-by-clause because it came to us while the committee was not sitting. At the start of the clause-by-clause, both myself and then Mrs. Witmer raised with the government what did they really mean by this letter, so we could get this on the public record, and what was the government's intention? Obviously, if the minister is sending this to us at the same time we're trying to do clause-by-clause, he must be trying to give us some signal. What is it, exactly, that he is proposing to do, and is it going to respond to the concerns that are out there about minimum standards? The question I raised with Mr. Patten at the time was, essentially, what did the letter mean? Mr. Patten said the following:

"The intent, of course, was to assure the committee that, while we will be short of time here to identify what all of the various health professions might see as a minimum standard, the ministry itself and the minister himself would be moving on contact with HPRAC to consult with the various professions—as you will see later as we go through the bill, there are six of them that in particular have identified that there is some use of acupuncture in

particular—and that there would be some collaboration. As you know, with HPRAC, the framework of the act is to encourage the various professions to work together and to acknowledge that indeed there is overlap, yet in the use of particularly acupuncture the function varies from profession to profession, as even the World Health Organization had acknowledged, and therefore it doesn't necessarily require the same standards. Nevertheless, the minister would move ahead on seeking the help of the council on contacting and moving in that direction."

To be really clear, I said to Mr. Patten again: "So what I want to be clear on....

"Is the letter a commitment to this committee and to the community at large that the minister is going to do a separate referral to HPRAC, a new referral to HPRAC, specifically on the matter of what are the minimum standards of practice to do acupuncture for the colleges that have been identified as those most likely to perform acupuncture? I would like to be very clear on what is the process here with respect to what the minister has raised, and should we read into this that the minister is committed to colleges having some minimum standard of practice in acupuncture before they are able to practise acupuncture?"

I asked, "So this is a new referral?" Mr. Patten said, "Yes, it would be." That was confirmed also by Christine Henderson, legal counsel, that there would be a new referral and the point of the referral was to get at this issue of minimum standards for a practice that is similar across a number of regulated health professions.

That is the letter. That is the referral. We have not seen the referral yet. It might have been helpful if we could have seen that at committee. It might have been helpful to ease some of the concerns of those who continue to have ongoing concerns, particularly with respect to this matter. I understand from ministry staff that it is being worked on and it's supposed to go out in very short order. I really hope that we move on this so that it doesn't continue to be a point of contention and a point of concern.

I certainly hope that HPRAC is going to be in position to come back to the minister with some very useful suggestions about what the minimum standards need to be across these colleges in order for their members to be able to practise.

I want to go a little bit further in this regard with respect to these minimum standards, because I asked during the committee, "Does the government have any authority, sway or influence over what those standards will be, or can the colleges essentially develop those on their own and adopt them as a practice?" So I raised the question with Mr. Patten, "Is there a mechanism whereby the minister has to approve the minimum standards?" And Mr. Patten said, "Any regulations that are developed have to be put forward and reviewed by the minister and" they have to be "approved by the Lieutenant Governor in Council." To be really clear—because I know that a number of colleges came forward and said that their own council was developing standards, but it wasn't clear to

me that those standards had to be approved by the government.

I asked the question again: "Let me get this straight. Let me use chiropractors, because that's the clearest example for me ... they have been looking at a standard of practice for their members who want to practise acupuncture. They will probably agree, as a council, to move to the WHO"—the World Health Organization—"guidelines. Is it a requirement, then, for the college to submit those guidelines to the minister for approval before the college authorizes its members to undertake acupuncture? Is that a requirement?" And legal counsel, Ms. Henderson, said the following: "The colleges have the authority to set standards of practice and qualifications for many of the innumerable procedures that their members may perform in accordance with the RHPA"—the Regulated Health Professions Act—"and their health-profession-specific acts. If it's a regulation that the college is putting forward in terms of qualifications or standards of practice, Mr. Patten has outlined correctly the process." If I go back to what the government says in their amendment, it is the following: that a person who is in the schedule can perform acupuncture only if he or she has met the standards and qualifications set by the college.

It is my hope that what will happen here is that because qualifications are being set, there will then be some requirement to do that in the form of a regulation that will go to the minister and will have to be approved by cabinet and the Lieutenant Governor in Council. I think that is an appropriate way to do it. It ties in with some of the concerns we raised that said, "We think the government should set those standards." The government might not be setting the standards, but I hope the government has some mechanism through regulation to exert some influence in terms of ensuring that appropriate standards are met. So I hope what I'm reading into this is correct and that the ministry's response, in terms of Ms. Henderson's response to me, is that because qualifications are going to be involved here, there will be a regulation-making process and the government will have the final "aye" as to what will be put in place.

I just want to say that a number of colleges have already risen to the challenge of developing very good standards and very fulsome standards. We heard about that during the course of the committee hearings. I trust that, as this bill gets passed, other colleges that may not have standards that are as well developed or qualifications that are clearly outlined are going to rise to the challenge too, to make sure that what everybody is doing is ensuring that members effectively and safely provide acupuncture, because that is certainly what matters most at the end of the day.

Let me deal, then, with the concerns around controlled acts. The amendment that we put forward would have permitted seven controlled acts that should be provided to those who qualify to be doctors of traditional Chinese medicine. The government accepted two of those, and they were already read into the record: performing a procedure on tissue below the dermis and below the surface

of the mucous membrane for the purpose of performing acupuncture, and communicating a traditional Chinese diagnosis etc. Those are the two that were accepted.

I didn't expect that we were going to get all seven, but I certainly hoped that the government would have approved two more. One of those, as Mrs. Witmer has already mentioned, was the controlled act of prescribing, dispensing, selling or compounding Chinese medicines and natural health products. I say that because this was the recommendation that was already made by HPRAC in 2001 in its report to the minister. It was recommended that prescribing and dispensing be a controlled act, and I regret that the government wouldn't accept a recommendation made by a previous HPRAC board member to have that as a controlled act as well.

The other one I had hoped the government would accept is the following: "Moving the joints of the spine beyond the person's normal physiological range of motion, using a fast, low amplitude thrust." This was really to get at the amendments that we did move that would also have recognized tuina massage in the terms of scope of practice and protected tuina massage therapist as a protected title. Those amendments were regrettably voted down. But that particular controlled act is tied quite directly to what tuina message therapists do. I felt that the government should have moved on that as well, since there had been some discussion etc. about that among MPPs before in their report.

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I noted that the government said today—because he referenced those two in particular—that the college will be looking at this matter. The college may well indeed move forward in bringing a recommendation to the government about adding these controlled acts to the ones that will already be allocated to doctors of traditional Chinese medicine.

The concern that I want to raise in that regard is this: It's clear that there are two ways for colleges to get increased access to other controlled acts. One of those is by the introduction of legislation in this chamber to amend the health profession act in question. Given that we're going to be passing Bill 50 soon, I don't think it's likely that we're going to be reopening Bill 50 very soon in terms of adding extra or new controlled acts. I'm sure that the transitional college or the new college, when it's set in place, may have this discussion, but I think it's unlikely that anywhere in the near future this act is going to be opened again to provide additional controlled acts. So I would have hoped that it would have gone in now, when we were already dealing with the act.

Secondly, the Ministry of Health's legal staff did also say that the other way that doctors or members of colleges who are doctors can get access to controlled acts is to exempt members of the profession or the activity from the controlled act provisions in subsection 27(2) of the RHPA, under the regulations. So maybe there is a mechanism through regulation under the RHPA that will allow for some further controlled acts to be provided to doctors of TCM.

As I say, I regret that the government didn't accept at least two more of the seven we put forward. I think they were realistic to put forward and they were legitimate to be accepted. I hope that if the regulatory route is real and if the new college comes forward with some other controlled acts, there will be an easier way to facilitate access to the controlled acts rather than opening up the bill again. I don't think that's going to happen any time in the very near future.

A couple of the other concerns that I raised at second reading are the grandfathering provisions and the language to be used in the licensing exams. Of course, those issues are going to be left to the new college to determine. Many concerns were raised about this. Since the new college is going to have at least six to nine members who will be elected from other members, so TCM practitioners themselves, I just have to assume that they're going to be sensitive to these matters and that they're going to deal with them in the right way.

Very clearly, there is a change coming, and there is great concern out there for people who have been practising a long time. Maybe the exam will be in English and they won't be able to pass it. These concerns are all legitimate. Because, essentially, the majority of the new college will be members of the profession themselves, I do hope they are going to be sensitive to that, that they're going to look for ways and means to accommodate their colleagues in a professional and safe way, but they are going to be sensitive to all of those concerns and come forward with grandfathering provisions that will take some of those concerns and fears into account and hopefully dispel them.

It's the same with respect to the language that's going to be used. I think there are opportunities here for languages other than English and French to be used. I'm hoping that those who are involved in the transitional college will deal with that as they deal with those provisions that are going to be necessary to give a certificate or licence to traditional Chinese medicine practitioners and acupuncturists after the new college is finally established.

I think there are two other issues that I just want to note on the public record. They were raised as concerns with me probably after the course of the public hearings. We did get some more information from legal counsel and the ministry about these. I think some of these have to be put on the record.

There was a specific concern around section 10 of the bill. That's a particular section that says, "Subject to the approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council and with prior review by the minister, the council may make regulations,

"(a) prescribing standards of practice respecting the circumstances in which traditional Chinese medicine practitioners shall make referrals to members of other regulated health professions."

I think the key word here is "may." There certainly will be a mechanism to allow this to happen, but it doesn't have to happen. There was some concern that was raised with me that this didn't appear in other bills

where other regulated health professions were in fact regulated, so why was it coming forward in this bill? Was there a negative connotation that was attached to it etc.?

If I can find it here, I think I should probably read into the record the question I raised on this during the course of the public hearings with the ministry staff. I said the following: "Let me ask this question, then. A concern was brought to my attention by a number of people in the traditional Chinese medicine community that this item with respect to mandatory referrals doesn't appear in other regulated health professions and that it would seem that TCM practitioners are being treated differently under regulation in this regard."

Mr. Cheng, who is the senior policy analyst with the ministry, said the following—actually, let me refer to Tim Blakley, manager of the regulatory programs unit, who said the following: "The Nursing Act contains certain provisions with respect to mandatory referral and consultation by members of the extended class of nurse practitioners. When it comes to communicating a diagnosis, members of that particular class of registered nurses must abide by certain standards with respect to communicating a diagnosis.... There are certain standards about consultation that are set out in the Nursing Act itself."

I asked if it was set out in the Nursing Act under the discipline section or under the controlled act section. Mr. Blakley replied, "Within the controlled act section." Then I asked, "So in your opinion, it is not out of line or not inconsistent, at least with this act, to have this provision?" He said, "It's a similar concept in this case. It's actually a discretionary power for the council as to whether or not they make these regulations." Hence the word "may." "In respect of the extended class for registered nurses, it's mandatory that they establish a standard and make a regulation."

I hope that has allayed some concern, that this is not entirely something new just with respect to this profession, that I don't think it's singling people out in any unfair kind of way with respect to making referrals. It's very clear that the council may make regulations—it's not that they shall—and they will have to make those determinations in the course of all their deliberations. I hope that has gone some way to resolving some of the concerns that were raised.

The other concern that was raised with me was that once the bill was passed, then a number of people would not be able to practise anymore. This wasn't raised during the course of the public hearings in any of the presentations, but I did ask on the record, again just to try and deal with some of the concerns that had been raised: What did the effect of this particular section mean? I asked Mr. Patten if it was clear that when section 12, which is the establishment of the transitional council, goes into effect, this does not mean that practitioners will have to stop practising, that in fact the transitional council can continue to act as a real council, that they will issue licences etc. and do all of those things until such time as the new council puts into effect those provisions that they will require for licensure down the road.

Mr. Patten said very clearly, "My understanding is that it will have no effect on anyone at the moment. It will only have an effect when the transitional council, which, by the way, will carry and have the powers of a full council—but when the council has done its work, is in place and has its regulations ready to go. It would mean that until that happens, it's business as usual."

I know there's change coming, but I hope that by trying to get that on the public record for those who had concerns that suddenly when section 12 of the bill was passed, they would not be able to get a certificate anymore and they would not be able to practise, that is not the case. The transitional college will continue to deal with certificates. Certainly, at some point down the road when regulations are adopted about what the qualifications will be for people to be TCM practitioners and what the grandfathering provisions will be, then people will have to deal with those changes. But for the moment, once section 12 is passed, it will continue to be business as usual.

Let me conclude by saying that I think the public hearings were very good, even though they were contentious and controversial at times, because I think they forced government to move on a number of issues that were not in the original bill.

Number one, I think it was important that the practice of acupuncture be restricted to certain regulated health professionals, and not something that all could engage in. The bill very clearly restricts acupuncture to a small number of regulated health professionals that the ministry has told us have it within their scope of practice.

Second, I was glad that the government accepted our amendment to change the name of the college to the College of Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners and Acupuncturists of Ontario. I think that was much more appropriate in terms of elevating and ensuring appropriate recognition and respect for both TCM practitioners and acupuncturists.

Third, there weren't any controlled acts when we started; now doctors of TCM will have access to two. I had hoped the government would go further—they didn't—but at least we have two that we did not have before.

Fourth, there is confirmation that once section 12 of the bill is passed, it does not mean that practitioners will not be able to practise. TCM practitioners will absolutely and clearly be able to continue to practise until such time as the TCM college determines what the provisions will be for grandfathering and how people will have to meet those in order to get a licence.

Fifth, the mandatory referral section: It's very clear that the council may make regulations in this regard, but they don't have to. That will be dealt with by members of the new college.

Sixth, members of the regulated health professions who will be allowed to practise acupuncture are going to have to meet standards and qualifications that are set by their colleges. I do hope that, per discussions that went on in committee, HPRAC will come back with some good ideas in this regard. But I also hope that, because

we're talking about qualifications, this will have to come in the form of regulation so that the ministry will still have some final eye, some final look or some final regard to ensuring that the standard of practice is appropriate to protect the public.

Finally, the minister has said, of course, that he's going to send this to HPRAC and we will see the development of standards of practice for some and similar controlled acts. I really hope that HPRAC is going to be in a position to respond quickly to this matter, to try to ease the concern that still is out there about what those standards will be.

The bill is not quite everything I hoped it would be—obviously, a number of our amendments weren't accepted; one was—but I do hope that HPRAC and the new college will be in a good position to ensure safe standards of practice for acupuncture, both in the TCM context and in the context of those practising as regulated health care professionals; that some very good work will be done to develop standards for those who are going to be doctors;

that in putting in place the grandfathering provisions, real sensitivity will be shown to the needs of those who are currently practising TCM; and finally, that all those who are working on this, who have a great deal of work ahead of them, will be able to work together in a very effective way so that all members of the community who want to benefit from TCM and acupuncture are going to be able to benefit from that expertise and are also going to be able to do that in a way that effectively ensures the safety of the public.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? Seeing none, Mr. Smitherman has moved third reading of Bill 50. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Pursuant to the order of the House earlier today, I do now adjourn the House until 1:30 pm. on Monday, November 27, 2006.

The House adjourned at 1644.

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No. 126A

N° 126A

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

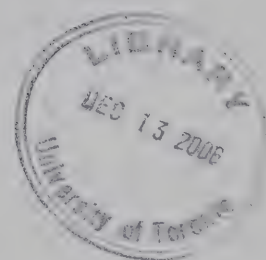
Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 27 November 2006

Lundi 27 novembre 2006



Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 27 November 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 27 novembre 2006

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DAIRY FARMERS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean–Carleton): On behalf of John Tory and the PC caucus, I'm very pleased to welcome the Dairy Farmers of Ontario. At a time when agriculture is under attack, Ontario's 5,282 dairy farmers continue to flourish, producing 2.5 billion litres of milk every year, adding 42,500 jobs to our economy, and generating farm cash receipts totalling \$1.6 billion.

Dairy farmers operate within a system known as supply management, and that is the foundation of our rural economies, including in my own constituency of Nepean–Carleton. Under supply management, consumers have guaranteed supplies of high-quality products at fair and stable prices. In return, farmers get stable incomes and receive a fair share of food prices. But the supply-managed sectors are nervous that ongoing trade negotiations might threaten this system.

That's why I'm so proud that my entire caucus, along with John Tory and our critic, Toby Barrett, have signed FarmGate5's initiative and their petition. I was shocked to see the divisions within the Liberal caucus on supply management. The health minister, who is the Deputy Premier, is apparently the ringleader for 31 Liberals who oppose supply management. To them I say, please sign the petition at www.farmgate5.org. In fact, I have several copies of this petition with me if any members opposite would like to sign the petition right now.

The dairy farmers are hosting a reception tonight at 5 p.m. in committee room 2. Come out, have a glass of milk, and I'll enjoy watching everybody and their milk moustache.

EVENTS IN LEAMINGTON

Mr. Pat Hoy (Chatham–Kent Essex): This spring a national publication, MoneySense, named Leamington as the number one place to live in the country.

Recently, two establishments in Leamington were recognized by the McGuinty government for their outstanding achievements. The Real Canadian Superstore received, for the second time, the Foodland Ontario Retailer Award for outstanding commitment and creativity

in marketing the produce grown by Ontario farmers. The Leamington store won the Platinum All Seasons Award, recognizing merchandising excellence in Ontario-grown commodities throughout three full seasons. This is a testament to the hard work and dedication of the management and staff of this grocery store as they promote Ontario-grown fruits and vegetables. It also shows that Essex county and Chatham–Kent are the breadbaskets of Ontario. When we buy Ontario's high-quality produce, everyone wins: farmers, retailers and consumers.

The South Essex Community Council received the minister's bronze award for excellence in delivering the Ontario government's Job Connect program. This program helps adults and youth plan, prepare for and succeed in the job market. The outstanding results of the Job Connect program in building strong partnerships with local employers go hand in hand with the success of helping people in our community upgrade their skills, become apprentices and find jobs. The staff at the South Essex Community Council deserve our thanks for helping people reach their potential.

I'm honoured to represent the citizens of Leamington, the number one place to live in Canada.

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): I want to congratulate Canada's Minister of Finance, the Honourable Jim Flaherty, for committing the federal government to a long-term plan of debt repayment.

Starting in the 1970s, governments across Canada forgot their obligation to future generations and our country became awash in a sea of debt. Even in good years, governments thought nothing of engaging in deficit financing instead of making a reasonable effort to live within their means. Increasingly, the demand for government borrowing could not be satisfied within our domestic capital markets and we were forced to borrow more and more overseas. This meant that we became beholden to the international bond markets and a greater and greater portion of the national and provincial budgets was wasted on interest payments on the ever-burgeoning public debts.

During the profligate NDP government of Bob Rae from 1990 to 1995, Ontario's provincial debt doubled. A necessary correction followed, and under our government balanced budgets were the norm and provincial debt was actually paid down. Unfortunately, since 2003 the McGuinty Liberal government has not shown the same degree of fiscal fortitude. In spite of their election

promise to balance budgets, they've been on a spending spree and have made conscious, deliberate decisions not to balance their budgets. Perhaps this explains why, three years ago, they voted against my private member's resolution which called upon the government to commit itself to a long-term debt repayment plan, with a vision of making Ontario debt-free in 25 years. This is an idea that I have been advocating in this House for the past nine years, since 1997.

Now that the federal government has recognized the need for long-term fiscal discipline and made a commitment to it, I once again call upon the McGuinty Liberals to do the same for the sake of future generations of Ontarians.

SOLAR ENERGY

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): This past Saturday morning I had an opportunity to go to an apartment building at 11 Coatsworth Avenue in the riding of Beaches–East York that is owned and operated by a group called Neighbourhood Link. What makes it a really significant place is that it is today the home of Toronto's largest array of solar power panels, which is producing the equivalent of 134,000 kilowatt hours of power per year. There are 60 panels that have been put on the roof of this apartment building that have been engineered by Taylor Munroe Energy but installed by a really terrific group from Beaches–East York called Mondial Energy. It supplies literally all of the hot water for the apartment building, and they do it at significantly less cost than the former gas-powered boilers.

1340

Mondial was developed by an engineer by the name of Alex Winch, who is famous throughout Beaches–East York. His very first enterprise was called the Queen Street Solar Laundromat, and all of the power and all of the hot water that is supplied in that laundromat is powered by the sun.

He has done the same thing now with the apartment building, and he has done it at considerably less cost than natural gas. In fact, it's only 15% of the cost of the Ontario government's photovoltaic panels at the CNE. It's funded privately and all of the profits go back to the people who live in that building and who put the money forward. It's a terrific development.

DAIRY FARMERS

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward–Hastings): It's my pleasure to announce that we have very special guests with us in the Legislature today. I'm sure that all members will join me in welcoming to Queen's Park members of the Dairy Farmers of Ontario. The Dairy Farmers of Ontario, a group we usually call the DFO, is a non-profit farm organization that represents Ontario's 4,700 licensed dairy farms.

The dairy sector is the biggest and brightest jewel in Ontario's agricultural crown. It's the largest agricultural sector and a major economic asset to this province.

Without the hard work of the DFO, there certainly would not be an elementary school milk program flourishing throughout the province. I know that our active healthy schools plan is enhanced by the DFO's province-wide school milk program. By delivering over 26 million cartons of milk each year and reaching over 70% of elementary schools, the DFO assists the McGuinty government in our efforts to promote healthy lifestyles for our students.

On a personal note, as a part-time farmer I would like to state that it's because of the DFO that we have safe milk in this province and a stable supply system that is the envy of the world.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound): I rise in the House today to support the fight against the controversial Bill 140, the Long-Term Care Homes Act. As I'm sure most of my colleagues here have heard from the administrators, residents and families in their riding, this bill is nothing more than an empty promise. If this government's definition of "comfort and dignity" for Ontario's elderly means crowding them into three- and four-bed wards, then it has no vision or plan for the 35,000 residents who occupy the older long-term-care homes.

Since this bill was introduced on October 19, 2006, I've received hundreds of letters, e-mails and postcards from concerned citizens in my riding. A few weeks ago, I sat down with the local long-term-care administrators and heard, loud and clear, how this bill threatens the future of these homes and the service they provide. I heard from Mary-Lynn Kennedy McGregor of Country Lane in Chatsworth, Dorothy Embacher of Meaford Long Term Care, Carole Woods of Parkview Manor in Chesley, Renata Hall of Summit Place, and Joanne Porter of Georgian Heights in Owen Sound.

Under the act's proposed limited licensing scheme, about half of the long-term-care homes will be given a licence that expires in 10 years, with no plan for what happens after; it would also allow the government to shut down a home or move beds to another community. It is my opinion that we owe to our seniors, among whom are our war veterans, our parents and our grandparents, a real commitment. It is time we demand that this government withdraw or rework Bill 140 and commit to increasing funding in the order of the promised \$6,000 per resident per year. It's time to treat our seniors with the respect and dignity they deserve. This is just one stack of the postcards and petitions—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

POLICE AND FIRE SERVICES

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): I recently had the honour of being a guest of the Lieutenant Governor and the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services for an awards ceremony honouring the bravery of Ontario's police and fire service professionals. This

service was held to award the Ontario medals of police and firefighter bravery to those officers who had gone beyond the call of duty to protect the communities that they serve.

Among the recipients was a young man from my riding, Constable Philip Hordijk. He was awarded for his bravery as a constable on the tactical team of the London police department. Constable Hordijk and four of his colleagues showed their bravery and dedication by entering a burning building to attempt to save a mother and her young children who had been trapped inside by the blaze set by an assailant who was holding them at gunpoint. The officers were shot at while attempting to enter the premises, but they persevered and they evacuated all of the inhabitants from the burning building.

Mr. Hordijk and his colleagues are all examples of the sacrifices that our emergency service professionals make while carrying out the duties of their office. We are privileged in this province to have such brave and dedicated emergency service professionals. It's our job as a government to continue to ensure that these deeds do not go unnoticed and that their working conditions remain as safe as we can possibly make them through our support.

PRIX DE LA FRANCOPHONIE DE L'ONTARIO

M. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): La semaine dernière, j'ai eu le plaisir de me joindre à notre premier ministre, M. McGuinty, et la à ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones, M^{me} Meilleur, pour célébrer le 20^e anniversaire de la Loi sur les services en français.

Nous avons célébré cet anniversaire en remettant les tout premiers Prix de la francophonie de l'Ontario, qui reconnaissent les contributions remarquables à l'épanouissement de la langue et de la culture françaises en Ontario. Ces prix reconnaissent les contributions remarquables à la vitalité sociale, économique, politique et culturelle, de même qu'au bien-être de la communauté francophone.

Pendant la célébration, M^{me} Meilleur a remarqué que la francophonie de l'Ontario était en plein essor et que nous voulons plus que jamais mettre l'accent sur l'avenir. Je suis du même avis que la ministre et je souhaite que les prix vont encourager les Franco-Ontariens de continuer à contribuer leurs talents pour enrichir davantage notre province.

Les prix seront remis chaque année à au moins un ou une francophone et à un ou une francophile. Ce soir-là, Gérald Savoie, le président-directeur général de l'Hôpital Montfort, était parmi les lauréats et les lauréates.

Nous devons tellement de notre succès en Ontario aux contributions des francophones. Je voudrais féliciter les quatre lauréats et lauréates des tout premiers Prix de la francophonie de l'Ontario.

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): Where, exactly, does the transitory member for Dufferin–Peel–

Wellington–Grey stand on the environment? The leader of the official opposition wants to increase Ontario's investment in coal, he wants to repeal our "You spill, you pay" legislation and he wants to allow municipalities to bypass the greenbelt legislation. Last month, the entire Conservative caucus—the same party that presided over the Walkerton tragedy—voted against Bill 43, the Clean Water Act.

In an August 15 press release, he accused our government of abdicating our responsibilities—by doing what? By passing the most progressive piece of water legislation in North America, the Clean Water Act. If this is so, then why did you, sir, abdicate your responsibility to vote?

On November 10, an editorial in the Orangeville Banner, a local newspaper in the member's current riding, asked why he and his caucus didn't consider it necessary to vote for the protection of such an important resource, our sources of water: "The proper management of these resources is critical to our very survival, let alone quality of life.... To be absent when these decisions are being made on our behalf is not acceptable."

The leader of the official opposition is clearly out of touch with his current constituency and, I would venture, all Ontarians. Is this the reason he has decided not to run in Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey and try to gain a seat in Don Valley West? I know that the Minister of Education voted for the Clean Water Act. The leader of the official opposition didn't.

The transitory member for Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey can't bob and weave his way away from his responsibility. It doesn't fly—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

VISITORS

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: It gives me great pleasure to introduce to the House the Enta family, who have come all the way from Don Valley East. We have Guy, Linda, Hayley, Evan and Rebbecca. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature. I hope you find today educational and instructive.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I will take this opportunity to introduce in the Speaker's gallery Inspector Mark Andrews, unit commander for North East Region Traffic and Marine, the Ontario Provincial Police, his wife, Ellen, and sons Jordan and Connor.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Pat Hoy (Chatham–Kent Essex): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on finance and economic affairs and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 151, An Act to enact various 2006 Budget measures and to enact, amend or repeal various Acts /
Projet de loi 151, Loi édictant diverses mesures énoncées dans le Budget de 2006 et édictant, modifiant ou abrogeant diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated Tuesday, November 14, 2006, the bill is ordered for third reading.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I ask for unanimous consent to put forth a motion without notice regarding the membership of certain committees.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I move that the following changes, to become effective on December 4, 2006, be made to the membership of the following committees: on the standing committee on estimates, Mr. Craitor replaces Mr. Arthurs, Ms. Jeffrey replaces Mr. Wilkinson; on the standing committee on finance and economic affairs, Ms. Matthews replaces Ms. Sandals; on the standing committee on general government, Mr. Dhillon replaces Ms. Jeffrey, Mr. Peterson replaces M. Lalonde; on the standing committee on government agencies, Mr. Duguid replaces Mr. Parsons, Ms. Mitchell replaces Mr. Wilkinson; on the standing committee on justice policy, Mr. Qaadri replaces Mr. Dhillon, Mr. Zimmer replaces Mr. McMeekin; on the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly, Ms. Jeffrey replaces Mr. Delaney, Mr. Qaadri replaces Mr. Sergio; on the standing committee on public accounts, Mr. Arthurs replaces Ms. Matthews, Ms. Sandals replaces Mr. Mauro, Ms. Smith replaces Mr. Zimmer; on the standing committee on regulations and private bills, Mr. Leal replaces Mr. Craitor, Mr. Rinaldi replaces Mr. Ramal; on the standing committee on social policy, Mr. Mauro replaces Mr. Qaadri, Mr. Parsons replaces Ms. Wynne.

The Speaker: Mr. Bradley has moved that the following changes, to become effective on December 4, 2006—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispense?

Interjection.

The Speaker: No—be made to the membership of the following committees: on the standing committee on estimates, Mr. Craitor replaces Mr. Arthurs, Ms. Jeffrey replaces Mr. Wilkinson; on the standing committee on finance and economic affairs, Ms. Matthews replaces Ms. Sandals; on the standing committee on general govern-

ment, Mr. Dhillon replaces Ms. Jeffrey, Mr. Peterson replaces M. Lalonde; on the standing committee on government agencies, Mr. Duguid replaces Mr. Parsons, Ms. Mitchell replaces Mr. Wilkinson; on the standing committee on justice policy, Mr. Qaadri replaces Mr. Dhillon, Mr. Zimmer replaces Mr. McMeekin; on the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly, Ms. Jeffrey replaces Mr. Delaney, Mr. Qaadri replaces Mr. Sergio; on the standing committee on public accounts, Mr. Arthurs replaces Ms. Matthews, Ms. Sandals replaces Mr. Mauro, Ms. Smith replaces Mr. Zimmer; on the standing committee on regulations and private bills, Mr. Leal replaces Mr. Craitor, Mr. Rinaldi replaces Mr. Ramal; on the standing committee on social policy, Mr. Mauro replaces Mr. Qaadri, Mr. Parsons replaces Ms. Wynne.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Monday, November 27, 2006, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say “aye.”

All opposed will say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1354 to 1359.

The Speaker: Mr. Bradley has moved government notice of motion number 239. All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Duncan, Dwight	Parsons, Ernie
Balkissoon, Bas	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Phillips, Gerry
Bentley, Christopher	Fonseca, Peter	Pupatello, Sandra
Bradley, James J.	Hoy, Pat	Qaadri, Shafiq
Broten, Laurel C.	Jeffrey, Linda	Racco, Mario G.
Bryant, Michael	Kular, Kuldip	Sandals, Liz
Cansfield, Donna H.	Kwinter, Monte	Smith, Monique
Caplan, David	Leal, Jeff	Smitherman, George
Colle, Mike	Mauro, Bill	Watson, Jim
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Wilkinson, John
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dhillon, Vic	Mitloy, John	Zimmer, David
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mitchell, Carol	
Duguid, Brad	Oraziotti, David	

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Marchese, Rosario	Runciman, Robert W.
Bisson, Gilles	Martel, Shelley	Scott, Laurie
Chudleigh, Ted	Martiniuk, Gerry	Sterling, Norman W.
DiNovo, Cheri	Miller, Norm	Tabuns, Peter
Dunlop, Garfield	Murdoch, Bill	Tascona, Joseph N.
Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John	Tory, John
Horwath, Andrea	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael	Yakabuski, John

The Deputy Clerk (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 40; the nays are 24.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

VISITORS

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: In the gallery today we have Daniela Falomo, who is the Italian teacher at Immaculate Conception school in my riding and is here visiting her student who is a page with us, Miss Alexandra Le-Heeralal. Welcome.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

FORMATION PAR APPRENTISSAGE

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): The McGuinty government believes that the knowledge and hands-on experience of a highly skilled workforce will give Ontario the economic edge we need to compete in the changing economy of the 21st century. That's why choosing to invest in the education and skills of our people is the right course for our society, for our economy, for our families and for our future.

Notre gouvernement a pris un engagement important pour que le système d'apprentissage de l'Ontario fournisse à la province la main-d'oeuvre qualifiée qui assurera sa compétitivité au sein de l'économie actuelle.

We set a goal to attract 26,000 new apprenticeship registrations annually by 2007-08. To reach that goal, we've introduced several initiatives to increase access to the skilled trades. These include an apprenticeship training tax credit, an apprenticeship scholarship and employer signing bonus, and the expansion of the Ontario youth apprenticeship program.

Today, I'm pleased to share with this House what we're doing with another program that helps build Ontario's skills: the pre-apprenticeship training program. Pre-apprenticeships open doors for people who want to learn a skilled trade, providing them with skills that can lead to a well-paying, fulfilling career.

Many of our pre-apprenticeship projects are geared toward those who face barriers in entering or advancing in the workforce. Those who have not finished high school, newcomers to our country, aboriginal peoples, or at-risk youth may share a desire to get into the trades, but they also face unique challenges in meeting the requirements for beginning an apprenticeship.

They come to the program focused on achieving a brighter future and determined to make a real commitment. They'll spend up to 40 weeks in their pre-apprenticeship project, including at least eight weeks on the job,

acquiring the technical, academic and employment skills they need to succeed as apprentices.

I'm pleased to announce that in 2006-07 the McGuinty government is creating close to 800 pre-apprenticeship spaces across Ontario to help people qualify for skilled trades training. We are investing more than \$7.6 million in 37 new projects that will prepare people who want to become apprentices for training in specific skilled trades. These include projects that target youth, aboriginal peoples, women and groups traditionally underrepresented in apprenticeship programs.

The projects will take place at colleges, union deliverers and community agencies throughout the province. Many projects are delivered in partnership with community organizations, industry, training boards and government agencies such as Job Connect. In fact, this morning I was with my colleague Kevin Flynn at Sheridan College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning to announce a new pre-apprenticeship project to provide 25 early high school leavers with training in the industrial mechanic millwright trade. The government will provide Sheridan with \$257,000 for the project, offered in partnership with the Halton Industry Council, Job Connect and the Peel-Halton-Dufferin Training Board.

Thanks to these pre-apprenticeship projects, more Ontarians will be able to prepare for training in well-paying, fulfilling careers in the automotive, construction, manufacturing and service sectors.

I'd also like to note that information on Ontario's pre-apprenticeship projects can be accessed through Employment Ontario, the province's new integrated employment and training network. Employment Ontario provides seamless, coordinated training, apprenticeship and labour market services, bringing together 470 service providers in almost 900 locations funded by the government of Ontario.

Earlier I said that our government is committed to increasing the number of apprenticeship registrations to 26,000 annually in 2007-08, and I'm pleased to say that our efforts are paying off. Thanks to programs like pre-apprenticeship, we are firmly on track to meet our goal. We exceeded our target for the year in 2005-06. Based on the number of registrations received by the end of August 2006, we're on track to meet our target for this year as well. In fact, a StatsCan study released two weeks ago confirmed that Ontario has been doing extremely well in terms of training new apprentices. The number of apprentices in Ontario has risen by 8.8% since 2003, beating the national average, and completions are up 15.9% in Ontario, outpacing other provinces with large apprenticeship systems.

Ontarians are recognizing the value of a skills-focused education. Our government is working to ensure that everyone in Ontario has the tools they need to prosper in the economy of the 21st century.

We welcome the participating colleges, union deliverers and community agencies who will be involved in our 2006-07 pre-apprenticeship projects. When we provide

more people with a chance to develop the skills needed in today's economy, everyone in Ontario benefits. Through pre-apprenticeship training, we're working together to help people take another step forward toward reaching their potential.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Responses?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to respond to Minister Bentley's comments today regarding apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship on behalf of our caucus, our leader, John Tory, and our critic, Jim Wilson.

I'm very pleased to be able to respond anytime to any of these debates around apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships because I have a skilled trades background and as a business person I have become very passionate about this issue over the years.

I want to tell you that one person I really wanted to thank was our former Minister of Education, the Honourable Janet Ecker, who allowed me in 2002 to do a report on vocational and technical training in the province of Ontario. I certainly enjoyed working with contacts all across the province and the challenges we face in trying to attract more people to the skilled trades.

I'd like to speak very briefly for a moment on an institution I am extremely proud of in my riding, and that is Georgian College. The college operates a number of campuses and a number of apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship and women-in-skilled-trades programs. In 1999, I worked with President Brian Tamblyn, and the one thing we agreed to do together was to enhance the two campuses that I have in my riding, the campus in Midland and the campus in Orillia. At the time, the Midland campus was nothing more than a couple of office spaces in the back where the radio station was located. Today we have the Industrial Research and Development Institute building, owned by Georgian College, and it is a skilled trades centre in central Ontario. There are a number of trades working out of there under the leadership of the manager of skilled trades, Gabe Koopmans. We have an electrical apprenticeship, precision machine and tooling, a recreational vehicle technician—the only one of its kind in the province—and we're in the process at Georgian College of adding additional apprenticeship programs as well.

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Mrs. Koopmans and her staff at the college have been able to partner with a number of industries in our region, and they're looking for further partnerships down the road as we try to have more apprenticeship programs in the area. For example, in the Orillia campus of Georgian College we have the marine mechanics course; the Barrie campus is centred around the automotive industry, the centre for automotive expertise; and in Muskoka we have the cook and chef programs as well.

There are other programs that I could go into as well, but I did want to point out today that there are a number of problems we still face in trying to attract people to the skilled trades and apprenticeships. One is the stigma that has been attached to working with one's hands or being a skilled tradesperson. That's still there today. In spite of

the fact that we do all these programs at the federal and provincial level and the colleges, we still have that issue today.

The average age is certainly increasing. Most of the skilled tradespeople in our province are over the age of 50. Although we are bringing on more people in pre-apprenticeship, just as many people are leaving the trades as they begin to retire. As well, I think we have the problem that a lot of jobs in Ontario have gone to western Canada. I can tell you also that there is still an inability to attract enough employers to satisfy all the needs of the apprenticeships that we'll need in this province.

I was talking to the college this morning, and one of the problems they have is funding, particularly for capital improvements and tools and resources for the apprentices to use as they take on more apprenticeships in the colleges. Of course, as well, there is the overall funding that the colleges are having a problem with. Many of the colleges in Ontario are looking at deficit budgets for the upcoming year—the first time in history that that has happened.

However, I do believe that this should be a non-partisan issue. It's the responsibility of the federal government and the provincial government to do as much as we possibly can to keep these skilled tradespeople coming on stream as we try to build our economy, not only here in Ontario but across our country as well. So we look forward to continual improvements in the apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs. We need to attract more young men and women to these particular positions. I look forward to announcements and very positive things happening in this particular area over the next few months.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I have to tell you, it really is very difficult to be enthusiastic in my response to these little mini-announcements that the minister makes on a regular basis. So I say, it's hardly revolutionary what he presents today. This little project of 25 people in a new pre-apprenticeship project for high school leavers is mini-nice, but again, it isn't revolutionary.

I want to point this out to the minister because he takes up a lot of time in this Legislative Assembly bringing these announcements on a regular basis. He never talks about why it is that at the elementary level we have lost home economics, for example; why it is that at the elementary level we've lost industrial arts programs; and why it is that he would not talk to the Minister of Education, at the elementary and secondary levels, to be able to say, "We need to reinstitute these kinds of programs because we believe that giving the students that experience is very useful as we prepare them for pre-apprenticeship programs." So he doesn't have to go too far—the minister is but within his arm's reach—to be able to say, "Let's work together on these matters." Yet not one word from him or the Minister of Education to talk about the value of the home economics and industrial arts that we've lost for the last 10 years and that this Liberal government has made no effort to bring back into the system.

Why is that? Why is it that this government doesn't believe it's important? And why is it that the Minister of Education just introduced and passed—Bill 52 will be passing soon in third reading. Bill 52, Monsieur Bentley, does the following: The Minister of Education creates equivalent learning programs that will be offered outside of the educational system by non-teachers, we have learned from the minister, which in my view and the view of many boards and teachers is contracting out what we normally have done in the secondary school system. The Minister of Education is quite happy to do that—happy to contract out the work to non-teachers. This is the new norm in the Ministry of Education at the secondary level.

Monsieur Bentley, I wanted to share something else with you. You will recall, the last time you made a statement on this matter, that I urged you to look at what Quebec has done and learn, madame la ministre, from what Quebec has to teach us from time to time. Just to repeat it for your benefit and the benefit of the other French-speaking folks and for the Premier, in fact, the Quebec government passed the Quebec act, fostering the development of manpower training, mapping the situation after 10 years of experimentation. The scope of the act and its main provisions were adopted in 1995. By 2005, the act reached all employers with a payroll superior to \$1 million a year. That includes around 11,000 employers. The goal is to improve manpower qualifications through increased investment in manpower training. A concerned employer must spend at least 1% of its payroll each year in training its personnel.

Now, if the minister of post-secondary education wanted to be bold, this is what he should be listening to as he debates this with the Minister of Education as we speak. That's what he should be listening to, because that's innovation, and that's bold, instead of these little mini-announcements that he introduces here on a regular basis.

Apprentices and trainees are included in the personnel for eligible training expenditures defined by regulation. A fund was established, independent from the state, under the name fonds national de formation de la main-d'oeuvre, sometimes labelled the partners fund. When an employer doesn't reach the 1% minimum, he or she must pay the difference to the ministry of revenue. This is important stuff. Further, the act also binds government ministries, one by one, and public corporations. For the government, the idea was to set an example to the private sector employers for the unions. The provision was welcome as a means to protect training budgets within ministries against the budget cuts that were expected 10 years ago.

Now, you see, Minister Bentley, that's what I'm talking about: bold. Reflect with us. We're willing to debate these kinds of radical, innovative ideas, but don't come here day in and day out with little mini-announcements that don't amount to much.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House

Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I seek unanimous consent for the representatives of each of the three parties in the Legislature to speak for up to five minutes on the White Ribbon Campaign.

The Speaker: Mr. Bradley has asked for unanimous consent for the representatives of each party to spend up to five minutes discussing the White Ribbon Campaign. Agreed? Agreed.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Hon. Sandra Papatello (Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would ask consent of the members of this House and you that we would be allowed to wear this white ribbon symbolizing organizations in opposition to violence against women, ribbons being available in both lobbies.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Ms. Papatello has asked for unanimous consent to wear the white ribbon. Agreed? Agreed.

WHITE RIBBON CAMPAIGN

CAMPAGNE DES RUBANS BLANCS

Hon. Sandra Papatello (Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues): This past Saturday, November 25, marked the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. On this day, people of all nations joined together in calling for a world in which women are treated equally and with respect and are able to live lives free of violence.

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November 25 is the start of a two-week period of commemorations and campaigns. Sixteen Days of Activism Against Gender Violence is a global movement that runs through International Human Rights Day on December 10. This year's theme reflects the understanding that advancing human rights and ending violence against women go hand in hand. Equality is a human rights issue, and inequality is understood as one of the root causes of violence against women.

The annual White Ribbon Campaign also launched on Saturday. It urges men and boys to wear a white ribbon as a symbol of their opposition to violence against women. Awareness of violence against women leads to action against it. The YWCA is launching its annual Rose Button Campaign to raise awareness of violence against women.

Over these next few weeks, these campaigns will raise public awareness worldwide. We'll all be reminded of our collective responsibility to take action and eliminate the abuse.

In Ontario, we are taking action. Over the past two years, our government has implemented major initiatives through our four-year, \$68-million domestic violence action plan. These measures are making a difference.

A few days ago, I was proud to also launch our government's groundbreaking new public education campaign. It teaches children and youth, boys and girls aged eight to 14, about healthy, equal, respectful relationships. Using a new interactive website, equalityrules.ca, which I urge every member of this House to visit, our campaign recognizes that if children better understand the kind of behaviour that's acceptable, then they're more likely to have healthy, equal relationships. Our goal is to teach the right behaviours at an early age, to stop the violence before it begins.

I have met with many courageous women who have escaped an abusive partner, and I celebrate each one of them. Together with all the women and men who are working to put an end to abuse, we are making progress. We still have a long way to go. We recognize International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, and I ask that we raise our voices against this issue that crosses all cultural, social and economic boundaries.

I ask every member of this House to be sure that the women in your communities know that if they suffer abuse, there is help and support for them and their children. I ask that we join together in strengthening our resolve to put an end to violence against women.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): It is my privilege to rise on behalf of the Progressive Conservative Party to say a few words concerning International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and the White Ribbon Campaign.

While it doesn't represent an excuse for complacency of any kind, the White Ribbon Campaign should be a source of pride for Canadians, not just because of the contribution it has made here and elsewhere to the awareness and understanding, better policies and programs when it comes to violence against women, but because it was and is a Canadian initiative which showed global leadership and has been taken up accordingly all around the world.

In its first year of existence, I received a call from Jack Layton asking if I would come with him to Union Station to hand out white ribbons, and I agreed. I can well remember the somewhat puzzled looks of commuters, people receiving these ribbons from men advocating an end to violence against women. You could tell just from the somewhat hesitating looks that people gave you, men or women, that they weren't sure whether we were people seeking absolution or whether we were people who were there trying to point a finger of blame at somebody else. But of course it wasn't about those things. That wasn't what we were. We were, I think, a group of men who were there to say we were prepared to take some responsibility, which is usually the starting point when you're trying to find a solution to any problem as severe and as complex as this one.

Since that time, through the efforts of the White Ribbon Campaign and successive governments, because of changing attitudes and because of the efforts of lots of individuals, a campaign like this has never been more

embraced, and that's good. We all know, however, that there is still so much more to be done, as the minister just said.

Thirteen women, for example, have been murdered by their spouse or partner just in the GTA so far this year. Three to six women each month across the province fall victim to the same circumstances, and those are the ones who have lost their lives. There are thousands more who live and who suffer, many of whom suffer behind closed doors without anyone knowing.

I'm absolutely sure other members of this House have had the experience I've had canvassing door to door and encountering a woman who answers the door with obvious signs of trauma, usually on her face. In the occasions—and I regret to say it's been plural when that has happened to me—I want to say something, but I don't, maybe because I'm a stranger or maybe because I'm a man. But you know, often more so from the sadness in the eyes, that this was no accident that happened. That's why we need to have days and weeks like this to keep a keen focus on what we can do to eliminate and eradicate this plague.

As they say, talk is cheap. We spend far more time around here than we should, on all sides, diminishing what we've all done at one point in time or another when we've had the responsibility. The fact is that most of the initiatives by all the parties have represented steps forward. This is the kind of issue, as the minister said, like so many, on which we should be trying to work more effectively together to determine exactly what the next steps should be.

I recently sat next to a woman at a dinner who is very involved in one of our foremost shelters. She told me of the fact that there was no secondary housing for women to move to as they try to get their lives back together. She was too polite to tell me that there had been a program which disappeared a few years ago and that it hadn't been restored. I called a public-spirited landlord, and that shelter has two apartments today, but let's be frank: That kind of ad hoc phone call made by anybody is not a program that will effectively address the overall shortage of primary and secondary shelter. While I know we can't do everything all at once, I'm equally convinced that we could work together and do something better than the status quo.

Fifteen years ago, I was handing out ribbons with Jack Layton, and today I join my colleagues here in this place, where I think we can do so much if we put our minds to it.

Dans les deux cas, nous avons le même espoir: que les hommes travaillent avec les femmes pour renouveler notre promesse et redoubler nos efforts pour assurer que cette violence appartienne au passé.

In both cases, the hope is exactly the same: that we, men and boys working together with women, can renew our commitment, can double our effort, and make sure that this violence is a thing of the past.

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto-Danforth): Wednesday, December 6, 1989, was the day of the Montreal

massacre. It was a day that started off as a very ordinary day for me, as it did for many, many others. At that time I was working as a manager in a housing co-operative here in Toronto, and I'll be honest: I don't really recall the routine events of that day. It was like any other until I heard the CBC Radio announcer in the evening with a partial report of what had happened. Like the announcer, I was totally horrified by even the first intimation of what had happened at that school.

Shortly after 5 p.m., a man named Marc Lépine had entered the École Polytechnique in Montreal, armed with a rifle, and proceeded to a mechanical engineering class, where he forced the males in the classroom out at gun-point, uttered the words, "I hate feminists," and then opened fire on the women who remained. He then continued his rampage in other parts of the building, opening fire on other students and staff. Fourteen women were murdered that day, nine injured, by a man who was enraged that women were pursuing studies in a field that he felt should be left to men like himself.

Canada's national psyche changed that day. We could not escape the fact that the attitudes and beliefs that perpetuated violence against women were prevalent in our society—prevalent and deadly. The day's events compelled a national dialogue about how underlying causes for violence against women continue to be inadequately addressed. Part of that dialogue included a man whom I know quite well, Jack Layton. The Leader of the Opposition alluded to him. He and others, like the Leader of the Opposition, saw that men had a collective responsibility to change attitudes and behaviours so that workplaces, schools, streets and homes were safe places for everyone. He saw that men had a responsibility to support women's groups in their efforts to get government, the courts and law enforcement to translate their words of condolence into action.

Thus the White Ribbon Campaign was started in 1991. Men were encouraged to wear the white ribbon to signal a personal pledge never to commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women, to make a commitment to the full equality of women. Over the past 15 years, the campaign has implemented awareness and education programs aimed at schools, workplaces and communities. White Ribbon has been working alongside women's groups, learning from their experiences and finding ways to lend financial and moral support to their work.

This response to a Canadian tragedy has gone on to become adopted internationally by some 35 countries as a model for awareness and outreach to address what is truly a global epidemic.

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The experience in Ontario is still troubling. One in two women will be the victim of sexual violence. Some 209 women have been murdered at the hands of men in domestic situations over the past 10 years—three this November alone.

Members of this Legislature know that my predecessor, Marilyn Churley, was one of the most dedicated advocates for women's equality in the Legislature's

history. She worked to get this House to bring forth the necessary policies that would change the situation. That work is now carried on by my colleague Andrea Horwath.

The white ribbon I wear today signals my support for the efforts of the member for Hamilton East. She advocates that the government bring forth a spectrum of programs and support that help women break the cycle of violence. For example, research shows that women are vulnerable to return to an abuser because they cannot locate housing for themselves and their children or don't have the financial means to support themselves and their families. They need resources and services that will help them settle safely outside the home.

My colleague has introduced a workplace harassment bill aimed at ending violence in the workplace, and that bill remains on the order paper. We're all well aware that private members' bills can be useful mobilization tools, and her bill has garnered a groundswell of support. I call on all members of this Legislature to respond accordingly and make her legislative proposal a reality. By doing so, we clearly demonstrate that the words uttered here are not hollow, that the ribbons we wear are not just decorative.

VISITORS

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: In asking whether this is a point of order, I know all members of the House would want to join me in welcoming members of OUSA, the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance: Paris Meiller, Scott Courtice and the other representatives in the galleries.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MARIJUANA GROW OPERATIONS

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. As the Premier is aware, yesterday I visited the residents of 2600 Jane Street, an apartment building that saw a massive raid on a series of marijuana grow-ops last week. The residents there told me that they're very concerned about the safety of the building in which they continue to live. Children have recently begun suffering from asthma; adults are getting headaches they didn't have before. There actually was a fire in one unit not too long ago.

As I indicated to the Premier in a letter I sent to him earlier today, I would like to know if the government of Ontario is prepared to work with the city of Toronto and others to take whatever steps are necessary on an urgent basis to assure the residents of 2600 Jane Street, the people who live in this building, that all necessary advice on health and inspections will take place quickly so that the residents will be satisfied as to their health and the

safety of the apartments. Also, will the government agree to establish, again on an urgent basis, a province-wide series of rules and protocols that can be followed so we can get help to people more quickly if incidents of this kind happen in the future?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I want to thank the leader of the official opposition for the question. I want to thank him for sending me advance notice of this. I think that's a wonderful precedent, by the way. I would like to see him follow that in the future. But I want to thank him for the sincerity he brings to this particular challenge before all of us.

Let me say that I too was disturbed by the bust that took place during the course of the weekend. I was also pleased, of course, that the police were able to locate this particular locale for a grow-op and to learn that arrests have now been made.

I say to the leader of the official opposition, and he's probably aware of this, that Toronto Public Health visited the building during the course of the weekend. I also understand that they are there today. I understand that during the course of the weekend they determined that there was no threat or health hazard coming from common areas in the building. I understand that today they're now investigating units adjacent to the grow-op locale itself, with a view to ensuring that those do not present a health hazard either.

Mr. Tory: I would hope that the Premier will consider the establishment of some sort of protocol or set of rules across the province so that when these things happen going forward—there have been 450 of these so far this year, not all in apartment buildings, thank goodness—people can get this kind of assurance they need and these inspections a bit faster.

In addition to the threats of fire and the health problems associated with mould, yesterday the residents told me about a lot of suspicious behaviour that had been going on in the building. They told me about complaints to building management going unheeded. They told me about power outages that happened two or three times a week for months on end, probably related to the grow-ops. They are looking for compensation for some of these hardships. I wonder if you could arrange for someone in the government to confirm—if you look at the wording of the victims of crime act, it would suggest that these people are eligible to use that process, if they wish, to make their applications, as others would, to see if they can get that compensation. I wonder if someone in the government might provide that information to these people so they will know if they can submit such an application and make it easy for them to do so if they wish to do so.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I know that the member of provincial Parliament involved, Mario Sergio, is making inquiries in that regard. I have had a brief opportunity to speak with the Attorney General about that, and Minister Kwinter as well, to see if there is something in existence at present, some funds, that might be available. But at the same time, I would not want to somehow lead the public

to believe that the property owner is not without some responsibility in this matter. We want to make sure that all steps there are taken, as well, to explore those possibilities.

The leader of the official opposition makes a good point, though, in that people may very well be asking themselves to whom they should turn. I think the most important information I can convey is that if someone suspects that either in their apartment building or in a neighbouring house there might be a grow-op or some suspicious activities, the first responsibility we have as citizens is to notify the police, of course. I think it's very important that Ontarians understand that the first resort in these kinds of issues is to phone your local police.

Mr. Tory: The residents did in fact say they did that. And they, by the way, found no fault with the police. They said the police came around and so forth and so on. But I think there's probably more needed here. A lot of people are too intimidated, as they are in other circumstances in some of the challenged neighbourhoods in Toronto, to speak up. But in any event, I agree with the Premier in that regard.

Premier, the OPP, as I mentioned earlier, reports that there have been more than 400 of these discovered in Ontario this year. This past Friday, an article in the Ottawa Citizen said that the criminals who run these illegal operations are getting bolder and using lethal booby traps to protect their own drug-growing operations. So if you combine this with the health and safety risks in apartment buildings, they're threatening innocent people who are living in these buildings. A lot of the people said yesterday they think the penalties for these crimes are too low. In fact, there was a justice in BC who recently said he thought they were a tap on the wrist. The sentences tend to range from one and a half to two years.

Since 2004, my college from Simcoe North has been calling, as I have been, for us to call on the federal government together for tougher sentences. I wonder if the Premier and the government would join us in saying to the federal government that they should be putting tougher penalties in place for these grow-op operators so that they get the message that this kind of stuff is just not acceptable.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: In short, yes, I am more than prepared to do that. The leader of the official opposition has proposed that we have a resolution in the House. I'll also ask him to consider another option: It may be speedier for us to co-sign a letter, all three leaders of the parties, and to direct that to Prime Minister Harper. There are a number of bills before the House of Commons at present which deal with toughening up gun laws, for example, and other penalties. It may be possible, in view of the fact that there could be an election called at any time, that the fastest thing that we might do is to ask the Prime Minister to amend an existing piece of legislation.

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): I think—my question is for the Premier—that in this

ecumenical spirit, we should ask the NDP to draft the letter, but that is a different matter.

My question, again, is for the Premier. This time it's on the economy. In the wake of the Premier's announcement in northern Ontario last week, the reviews were negative. One industry executive quoted in the *Globe and Mail* said that the government's response to this crisis has been sporadic at best and not the grand master plan that's required. Of course, as if any proof was needed, the day after, Tembec announced its Timmins sawmill would close indefinitely and Bowater warned its employees that a major restructuring was on the way.

Your Minister of Natural Resources claimed the forestry sector had got off scot-free. This is almost as insensitive as the Minister of Energy saying that the people up north should have some good wine and a blanket if they can't afford electricity, when you see tens of thousands of people who have lost their jobs.

My question is this: Nearly a year ago, this House adopted a resolution calling for a comprehensive plan to deal with job losses in the province. When will you be tabling that plan?

1440

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): It gives us an opportunity today to bring the Leader of the Opposition up to date on many of the things we've been doing.

As you know, it was a year ago that we signed the labour market development agreement with the government of Canada, the last province to do so. It will ensure that as of January 1, we'll have a billion-dollar training system that will benefit workers and businesses in the province of Ontario.

Just a week and a half ago, we launched Employment Ontario, which is an initiative to coordinate the 470 providers, in 900 locations, in the province of Ontario that provide every type of training from basic literacy to advanced apprenticeship training, to ensure that we can deliver what the worker needs and what the business needs in the location where they happen to be. It includes a referral network by the providers, a 1-800 number to actually find out where you can get the information and information in 21 additional languages. I'm looking forward to providing the leader with more information.

Mr. Tory: That's all very interesting, but what the resolution in this Legislature approved by members of all three parties in fact said was that the House call upon the government to bring forward a comprehensive program dealing with job losses and so on, and we have not seen that. Even in the auto sector, where we've had some successes at attracting new investments, we've seen at the same time huge job losses that contradict the constant claims of nothing but upward progress. A story in the *Globe and Mail*, on November 23, 2006, says that parts makers have been hit by a "foreign onslaught," and it goes on to say that despite several recent announcements

of investments, they "have not offset several plant closings and job cuts" and that this sector "has lost 10,000 jobs since the start of 2005."

My question was, and I'll repeat it for the Premier: When are we going to see the comprehensive jobs program that was endorsed by all sides in this House? When are we going to see that—not a hodgepodge of individual initiatives but a comprehensive jobs program? That's what was called for by all three parties, including the Liberal members. When are we going to see it?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: In fact, the jobs program consists of the initiatives to spur investment, whether they are tax measures, advanced manufacturing initiatives or auto sector initiatives. On the other side, when workers need retraining, when businesses need access to retrained workers, just two weeks ago we invested in literacy and academic upgrading programs, acknowledged by all to be the single most important potential driver for improving productivity. The federal government is decreasing that.

We just announced today 800 more places for pre-apprenticeship programs throughout the province of Ontario, one of the routes to ensure we have more skilled trades for the future. That's the way you ensure that the businesses in the province of Ontario will have the workers they need to properly compete, investments in Job Connect, which connect youth and adults with the jobs that businesses need. It's fine to talk about the comprehensive plan, but we're actually delivering it.

Mr. Tory: It was the Liberal Party, Mr. McGuinty's party, the Premier's party, that actually did vote in favour of bringing forward a comprehensive plan. "Comprehensive plan" means you pull it all together and it's a plan that has a number of different elements to it. Since October 2004, this province has lost more than 10% of the manufacturing jobs it once had. And the government, for a full year now, has not brought forward a comprehensive plan. Just last week, in fact, the McGuinty Liberal government used its majority to reject another possible job preservation measure, brought forward this time by the NDP. Instead, the government seems to be quite content to use words like "cycles," "inevitabilities" and "contractions" and shrug it off. I'm asking why they won't, for once, do what they said they would do, what they voted for almost a year ago, and bring forward a comprehensive program altogether, come in here and make a statement for jobs in Ontario. We're waiting for it. The people are waiting for it. The communities are waiting for it. When are you going to do it?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: The question to which we've not received an answer is, when will the Leader of the Opposition stand up for Ontario and tell Prime Minister Harper to deliver on the labour market partnership agreement, tell Prime Minister Harper that workers and businesses in the province of Ontario deserve the same level of support as workers and businesses in every other province? When will he pick up the phone and tell Harper, "Show us the money"? Harper promised in January. Harper has not delivered. The Canada-Ontario agreement is essential for the businesses of Ontario to

compete, essential for the workers to get the training they need to compete. I don't see why a worker who's in need of training in Ontario should get less than they get anywhere else. It's time for our fair share. Pick up the phone.

MINIMUM WAGE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale-High Park): My question is for the Premier. Many Ontario families are working harder than ever before. Many are working two or three jobs just to make ends meet. Many are a paycheque or two away from poverty. Their provincial government is supposed to be on their side. Instead, respected advocacy group Campaign 2000 tells us Ontario's child poverty rate has gone up, in one year, from 16.1% to 17.4%. A fair minimum wage is the best way we all know to ensure that hard-working Ontarians are able to share in our wealthy province's prosperity.

Premier, my question for you is, why won't your government raise the minimum wage to a living wage: \$10 an hour?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I appreciate the question and I appreciate the member's ambition when it comes to helping Ontario's most needy. But she should recognize, at least from time to time, that we are taking steps in the right direction. I think we're the first ones to bring about increases in Ontario's minimum wage in some nine years. I think it has gone up three times now and it's going to go up again. We will give every consideration to how we should move it beyond that point.

Again, I appreciate the member's ambition, but we like to think that we are going in the right direction and look forward to doing more.

Ms. DiNovo: I quote from an editorial in the Star of October 19 of this year, where they say, "In effect, they are arguing"—that is, the government—"that the living standards of our poorest workers must continue to suffer for them to be able to hold on to their jobs." Mr. Premier, it's too little, too late, this \$8 an hour. In 2003 we brought that in and we wanted it immediately. Now we need \$10 an hour immediately, and this is just catch-up. This is just catching up to what the rate was in 1972.

I ask this government again: Things are getting worse for working families. As Ontario's rising child poverty numbers show, we are a national and international disgrace with our child poverty rate. Why won't this government provide Ontario's lowest-paid workers some real protection against poverty, and that is a \$10-an-hour minimum wage?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, I appreciate the member's tenacity and perseverance in this regard, but in government I think it's really important that we understand that there is some connection between an employer's ability to employ and the cost of that employment. That has to do with the amount of minimum wage. We are absolutely moving in the right direction. We brought the minimum wage up some three times now. It's on its way to \$8 per hour.

But there's more than just the minimum wage when it comes to meeting the needs of our most vulnerable, particularly our children. That's why we have in place free vaccinations for children. Over one million children have received those, saving families \$600 per year per child. We have also put in place \$8.5 million more per year for our student nutrition program, so that 84,000 more children are being served. That's a 45% increase. We're also going to be the first province to fund insulin pumps for children. So I appreciate again the member's tenacity and perseverance when it comes to minimum wage, but we're moving forward on a number of fronts.

Ms. DiNovo: Mr. Premier, if only we could vaccinate our children against poverty. More than one third of low-income children live in families where at least one parent works full-time throughout the year. It is unacceptable that someone can work full-time, and work hard, and not be able to lift their family out of poverty. This is happening now: 13,500 children are using food banks now. This House has passed second reading of my \$10-an-hour minimum living wage bill. Why won't this government make this speedily a law?

1450

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I am not sure how much more I can add at this time, except to say that we will be doing more when it comes to providing additional supports for Ontario children. We are pleased with the progress we've made but hardly satisfied when it comes to taking into full consideration the extent of the challenges faced by Ontario's most vulnerable families.

I say again for the record that we have increased the minimum wage some three times. I believe the NDP voted against those increases. We will be increasing it one more time. We've helped out when it comes to vaccinations, when it comes to student nutrition programs, when it comes to our new program to fund insulin pumps for children. Those are areas in which we have moved and in which we will continue to move.

NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT SUPPLEMENT

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, under your government the income gap between low-income families and well-off families continues to widen. Campaign 2000 reports that for every \$1 earned by the poorest 10% of families with children, the richest 10% earn \$14. The national child benefit supplement aims to shrink that gap by providing low-income children with \$1,500 a year for food, shelter and clothing.

My question is, why, in the face of rising child poverty, does your government continue to claw that money back from Ontario's most vulnerable citizens, our children?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for franco-phone affairs): Our government recognizes that it is difficult to live on a low income and particularly on social assistance. But since we have taken office, we have made steady progress each and every year to help Ontario's poorest citizens. We have made certain that every single increase to the national child benefit supplement stays in the hands of the people who need it the most. We are continuing to flow through these increases, and by the end of March 2008, social assistance recipients with children will have received an additional \$75 million in support. That is a significant investment.

Our government is also helping individuals on social assistance who don't have children. In 2004, we invested more than \$100 million to provide a 3% rate increase for every person on social assistance—the first increase in 12 years. This year—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Prue: Back to the Premier again. Ontario has enjoyed years of prosperity and personal and corporate wealth, but under your watch poverty is on the rise. Instead of action, your government ignores mounting evidence that we are losing that battle.

Campaign 2000 reports that the average low-income two-parent family is as far behind today as they were 11 years ago. That's some progress your government is making.

When is your government going to provide real protection against poverty by keeping your promise and fully—and I underline that word “fully”—stopping the clawback of the national child benefit supplement?

Hon. Mrs. Meilleur: Increases to income only tell part of the story. We are also helping social assistance recipients become more financially independent by making important changes that will help them find a job, increase their earnings and, for those who can, move off social assistance into paid employment.

In addition, our government is helping Ontario's most vulnerable adults and families in ways that are too often overlooked, such as increasing \$8.5 million in student nutrition programs to serve healthy meals and snacks to more than 270,000 students across Ontario. We are also investing \$301 million as part of the new Canada-Ontario affordable housing program agreement.

We cannot undo more than a decade of harm in three short years—

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary.

Mr. Prue: My question is back to the Premier, because the honourable minister never seems to quite get around to the real question.

Here's what the Toronto Star says about your record: “Provincially, the Liberal government of Premier Dalton McGuinty refuses to make up for past damage by the previous Conservative regime by raising the minimum wage to \$10 an hour, ensuring hard-working families can rise out of poverty. And it steadfastly refuses to stop

clawing back the national child benefit supplement from families on social assistance. Or to increase welfare payments to those same families.”

Mr. Premier, my question is back to you because you're the man in charge. If your government really believes growing inequality is not right, why don't you do something about it?

Hon. Mrs. Meilleur: As I explained, we have raised social assistance twice since we came into power. There is always more to do. Every ministry is responsible for helping to improve the quality of life for children.

The member of the third party wants to show that they are the answer to child poverty. Look what they did when they were in power. The Ontario child care supplement—one out of five children were on social assistance when they were in power. They reduced services, they increased taxes and they also increased tuition fees for children. So they speak today about what they have done, but this government is the government—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. Ontarians continue to visit the wastebusters.ca website, and over the last little while we've heard quite a few interesting examples: \$1.2 million spent by the Ministry of Education on hotels, over and above another \$2.3 million on travel; \$1.4 million spent by the Ministry of Health on hotels, over and above another \$6 million spent on travel. Today we have another unbelievable example. In 2005-06, the Ministry of Health spent over \$5.5 million on furniture. When you go to the Staples website, you can get a chair for \$100 and you can get a desk for \$250. At that price, the Ministry of Health could have purchased 50,000 chairs or 22,000 desks. That would be pretty good going, even for them.

Can the Premier tell us why the Ministry of Health is spending this kind of money, this dramatically increased sum, on furniture instead of spending it on health care for people?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Government Services.

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): I would say to the Leader of the Opposition and to the public that we relentlessly pursue cost savings. Every two weeks, I sit down with a group of people who are working on how we are going to achieve our \$750-million savings target. And we're hitting it. We have already identified and actually banked \$100 million in IT savings, \$250 million on procurement policies, \$50 million on finding ways to handle our accommodation on a much more effective basis. So I would just say to the public that we relentlessly pursue cost savings on a daily basis—every two weeks I sit down—and we are achieving those targets. We have now saved \$750 million, but we won't stop there. On a daily basis, we will keep look-

ing for ways that we can make sure that every penny of the taxpayer's dollar is spent effectively.

Mr. Tory: I say to the minister, with respect, that we've never had one single, comprehensive, line-by-line report on that \$750 million you now claim to have saved. Never once has there been a report outlining how you saved it. I would also point out to the minister that the \$5.5 million spent by the Ministry of Health on furniture is \$1 million more than was spent on furniture in the previous three years combined.

When 1.2 million Ontarians are without a family doctor, when we hear every day that people are waiting in emergency rooms to get care, when we have situations where services have been delisted and we hear there are all kinds of problems in the health care system, my question was and is, how can you justify seeing the Ministry of Health spend \$5.5 million on furniture—more than the previous three years combined—if you're really attending, as you say you are, to saving money? This is disrespectful of taxpayers' money, and you know it. What are you going to do about it?

1500

Hon. Mr. Phillips: Again, I would just say to the member and to the public, the \$750 million I talked about has actually been fully realized. The Ministry of Finance has fully booked those.

I would say to the public and to the member of the opposition, I think for three years we've spent virtually nothing on furniture. We were very conscious of making sure that the furniture budget was well handled.

I would say this: As we move forward on our accommodations strategy, moving to smaller space, where our public servants use smaller space, there will be a need to purchase some furniture, to spend money on furniture, because they do require less space and smaller furniture. But apart from that, we are using our old furniture.

Again, I would say to the public, \$750 million of savings fully booked, and we're looking for more savings on a daily basis. We are going to look after the taxpayers' dollar, unlike the previous government, where we found an over \$5-billion deficit when we arrived.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is for the Premier. Stakeholders from Children's Mental Health Ontario have been working hard to shape your government's policy framework on children's mental health. They're worried, though, that the new policy for helping children with mental health problems is not going to be backed up by government investment. How much money will you commit towards implementing the new children's mental health policy framework here in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): The Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): I'm happy to inform the member from Hamilton East that as recently as this morning, I spoke at the annual conference for Children's Mental Health Ontario and addressed more than 300 people there who are absolutely thrilled with the work our government is doing with that sector to ensure more ready access to children, youth and their families, and also more coordinated services and a more integrated system, which is what parents and service providers have told us they need.

Last week the member from Hamilton East inadvertently misrepresented the situation in children's mental health. I would have hoped that she would have started her question by—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The minister needs to withdraw the word.

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: "Misrepresented"? I withdraw, Speaker.

What she presented to the House was in fact inaccurate, and I spoke with her about that and would really have appreciated her recognizing that fact. I look forward in the supplementary to hearing her acknowledge that, and I will speak some more about what we are doing in children's mental health.

Ms. Horwath: Again to the Premier: One in five children suffers from mental health problems in the province of Ontario. The earlier they are detected and treated, the more the costs are avoided down the road. The minister will know that. She will also know, if she was in fact listening to the people at Children's Mental Health Ontario, that they are saying that integration and coordination of service is simply not enough, that in fact agencies are doing a lot of that already.

This sector has lost 30% of its capacity to treat children with mental health problems over the last several years. It has been virtually frozen for 14 years, including the last three years under the McGuinty government. Notwithstanding a piddly amount that you may be proud of, they are losing ground significantly in this province, and the minister knows very well that's true. How does bringing forward a policy framework without attaching the necessary funding enable mental health providers to serve the growing number of children who are needing and waiting for help?

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: One of the things I like about my portfolio is that it's really supposed to be about kids; it's not supposed to be about partisan politics.

I want to tell you of my disappointment in the member not recognizing that it was 12 years that went by, including years when your party was the government, when funding for children's mental health was frozen, as in absolutely no increases—cut, in fact, in some of those years. That's the lost ground that we are working hard to recover now, and that has included an increase, since we have been in government, of \$38 million per year, effective this year. Out of that increase we are either expanding or adding almost 200 new programs for kids.

We have announced increases that are non-program-specific, increases to operating—

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. New question.

DAIRY FARMERS

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. As you know, Ontario's agriculture industry has been very innovative, and they have remained competitive in light of challenges to supply management in international trade.

Today dairy farmers are visiting from across the province to discuss exciting and innovative programs that go beyond their enormous contribution to our province's economy. Within Huron–Bruce I have 282 dairy farms, and I've met with them many times and talked about how to strengthen our rural communities. But what they are here to talk about is to describe their remarkable commitment to children's health and well-being in all of Ontario. Minister, could you please explain how our government's active living mandate to improve the learning environment of Ontario students will be significantly enhanced by the dairy farmers of Ontario?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I'm happy to have this opportunity to respond to that.

Interjection.

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I heard the member from Simcoe North say what a great member the member from Huron–Bruce is, and I agree with you. I agree with the member from Simcoe North. I'm also delighted to see in the gallery today members from the Dairy Farmers of Ontario. They've joined us, as the member has indicated. They're here to talk about dairy issues, obviously, but I'm particularly impressed that the focus of their visit here today is one of the programs that I think they're most proud of, and that is the milk-in-schools program they have established across Ontario. Right now, because of this important focus to provide good, nutritious milk to our students in Ontario, they provide 26 million cartons of milk to the children in our schools. They're here to ask for this government's and all parties' continued support for initiatives like this to expand access to milk—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

Mrs. Mitchell: It's great to see that our agriculture industry is supportive of our government's efforts to make our schools healthier places for all of Ontario's students. Minister, given the size and distinctly rural nature of my riding, there are many schools in my various communities, and they each have different needs and requirements. How does the McGuinty government's active healthy schools plan fit into encouraging healthy lifestyles for all of Ontario's children and youth?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: Minister of Health Promotion, please.

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): I'm very pleased to answer the question because we work

closely with agriculture and the Ministry of Education to promote and push forward our wellness agenda. We know there has been a 300% increase in obesity rates in the last 15 years in Canada, and we have to be aggressive. That's why we've removed junk food and sugary soft drinks from vending machines in elementary schools. We've brought in 20 minutes of physical activity. We are, for the first time in 30 years, working with dairy farmers with their very successful milk calendar that just came out and was distributed across the province. We want to commend the dairy farmers for the work they do with milk programs and providing fridges in schools. We also are very much in tune with the nutrition and health message that the milk farmers provide. So we look forward to people looking through this milk calendar. I see that in October they have chicken cacciatore, and I look forward to—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby–Ajax): My question is for the Attorney General. In the Toronto Star this weekend, Helen Henderson wrote a column with respect to your government's sudden decision to cut off the hearings on Bill 107. Among her concerns is your repeated refusal to explain how you will possibly keep your promise to fund a lawyer for every complainant to the Human Rights Tribunal. She states that you have "failed to allay concerns about funding for the new system" and that your "approach has been flawed from the start."

1510

In the Toronto Sun, David Lepofsky also expressed his profound dismay at your government's handling of the file. He wrote:

"McGuinty promises a new legal clinic to help with the horrendous burden that Bill 107 dumps on discrimination victims.... Yet neither Bill 107 nor his recently announced amendments to it keep the Liberals' extravagant pledge of a free independent legal counsel for every complainant at the Human Rights Tribunal."

Minister, these are two known champions of vulnerable people. You've continually failed to answer my question about how you're going to keep this promise. Will you at least listen to them and finally provide a clear answer?

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): We're listening to them. We're listening to everybody who's been contributing to this debate for some 20 years. If the member looks back in Hansard, one of her predecessors, in that he was an Attorney General critic for the third party in 1991, called on the then government of the day to hurry up and move forward with human rights reform. So there's been an enormous amount of debate, and there's clearly more than one position on this, but the consensus that has in fact developed is that it is time to move forward and not delay reform any further. Why? Because we can't continue to allow the delays that face complainants who go before the human rights system to

continue. That's why we have this bill before the Legislature, that's why we've had this debate for more than 200 days, that's why we had the committee hearings, and that's why it's going to come back to the Legislature for third reading vote.

Mrs. Elliott: In side-stepping my question last week, Minister, with respect to funding your legal support centre, you stated that recent technical briefings held by your ministry staff allowed you to draw on the expertise of different individuals to presumably draft a funding plan.

I received a copy of a letter to you dated November 23, 2006, from Elisabeth Bruckmann, the staff lawyer from Parkdale Community Legal Services whose presentation to the justice policy committee I referred to in asking you that question. In that letter she expressed her dismay at your response that these technical briefings presented any opportunity for consultation. She continued to say:

"I would ask that you refrain from further allegations that you have held broad consultations on this bill when you have not. I would specifically ask that you not suggest that I was included in a consultation with your staff when you ought to know that was not the case."

Minister, you clearly have no plan for this legal support centre, so there's no big hurry. Why, then, do you refuse to accept John Tory's compromise vote on this bill: to vote first thing in the spring in exchange for full and meaningful consultations now?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: Again, a full and meaningful consultation and task force have taken place here in Ontario and in Canada, and by the United Nations Human Rights Committee. There has been full consultation around this bill before, during and after its introduction. At some point, we have to say that we have to reform this system wherein we have process gridlock. There seems to be agreement that we need to reform it, so we have debate as to how those reforms will take place. At some point, we have to say that the positions are before the government, the positions are before this Legislature, and people will have an opportunity to support it, to vote for it, or vote against it. But the idea that we continue to delay making that decision, and thereby delay the desperately needed reforms to the human rights system, is not one that I can accept.

SERVICES FOR DISABLED CHILDREN

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is for the Premier. On Friday, families who have children with severe disabilities were dealt a severe blow by the Ontario Court of Appeal because your government refused to enter into section 30 agreements, which direct the appropriate level of care to these children while in the care of their own parents. In 2005, the Ombudsman told you to restore the agreements with families so that children with multiple disabilities would receive the comprehensive care that they so much deserve and need.

Why do you continue to ignore the Ombudsman? Why are you not entering into section 30 agreements with the families of severely disabled children?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): I think it is 63 kids who have been returned to the custody of their parents, as they should be. This is a file that we inherited from the previous government and corrected quickly once it came to our attention. The Ombudsman, in fact, was quoted in the media reports that I saw on Saturday as recognizing that our government has acted quickly.

I want to just reinforce the fact that children who require special services for their exceptionalities are receiving those services and in fact will be receiving even more of those services in a more timely manner and that this has absolutely nothing to do with protection. If kids are in need of protection, that's a different issue and it is only when they're in need of protection—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary.

Ms. Horwath: I think the minister will know that there are still hundreds of families that are in crisis this very day and you're turning your back at this moment on some of the most severely disabled children in Ontario. The McGuinty government has a responsibility to help these families and enter into section 30 agreements or something else that is going to help them get the services they need. Families are still feeling pressured—you should know this—to give up their children to the children's aid society to obtain ongoing treatment, treatment that is different depending on where you come from in the province of Ontario. The treatment is not the same and the way to get treatment is not the same, depending on what community you're coming from. So rather than dragging these families through the courts or suggesting that they give up custody of their disabled children, why doesn't the McGuinty government follow the Ombudsman's recommendation of 2005 and provide the services that they and their children need so desperately?

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: It's absolutely wrong for the member to suggest that anyone in our government is suggesting that parents should be giving up custody of kids who need special care. That is shameful. That's absolutely shameful. In fact, since our government has been in office, we have increased the funding for kids with special needs by more than \$140 million. Earlier this year—

Interjection.

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: The member thinks that's funny, but it's really serious. It's very, very important that we care for these kids. I want you to know that earlier this year we announced an increase in base funding to our children's treatment centres that is resulting in more than 4,800 more kids receiving the services—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

PROGRAMME ONTARIEN DE SOUTIEN
AUX PERSONNES HANDICAPÉES

M^{me} Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): Ma question s'adresse à la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires.

Avoir un emploi, c'est avoir un meilleur revenu et avoir la possibilité d'apporter sa contribution à la collectivité, de rencontrer d'autres personnes et d'atteindre ses objectifs personnels.

À l'heure actuelle, plus de 20 000 bénéficiaires du programme ontarien de soutien aux personnes handicapées, le POSPH, travaillent. C'est environ 9 % des personnes visées par le programme.

Si l'on peut croire la clientèle et les porte-parole du programme, de nombreux autres bénéficiaires seraient désireux et capables de travailler, à condition d'avoir le soutien nécessaire. Quel soutien offrirons-nous à ces gens?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur (ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones): Premièrement, je voudrais remercier la députée de Nipissing pour son engagement envers la communauté de personnes handicapées.

Oui, elle a raison : il y a seulement 20 000 personnes qui travaillent et il y en a beaucoup plus qui veulent travailler. Alors, sa question me permet de vous parler d'importantes modifications amenées au programme. Ces modifications sont mises en place afin d'encourager les bénéficiaires à entrer sur le marché du travail et avoir une plus grande autonomie financière. Nous avons introduit une exemption de base toute simple de 50 % sur tous les gains, ainsi qu'une nouvelle prestation liée à l'emploi de 100 \$ par mois. Les bénéficiaires du programme pourront ainsi garder une plus grande partie de ce qu'ils gagnent.

Prenons le cas d'un bénéficiaire célibataire, par exemple, qui a un revenu mensuel de 600 \$. Désormais, on ne déduira plus que 300 \$ de son chèque au lieu de 330 \$. Ce bénéficiaire recevra une indemnité supplémentaire de 100 \$ pour couvrir une partie de ses dépenses de travail. Cela—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Merci. Thank you. Supplementary?

M^{me} Smith: Ça fait du bien de savoir que notre gouvernement est d'accord avec la communauté des personnes handicapées et estime que trouver un bon emploi est essentiel si l'on veut améliorer la qualité de vie et le bien-être financier des personnes handicapées et de leur famille.

Pourriez-vous partager un autre exemple qui démontrerait l'amélioration de la qualité de vie résultant de ces modifications que vous avez annoncées?

L'hon. M^{me} Meilleur: Notre plan pour aider davantage les personnes handicapées à trouver un emploi stimulera l'économie tout en renforçant les collectivités de la province de l'Ontario.

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Nous avons apporté d'importantes améliorations au programme pour mieux aider les personnes qui travaillent

et encourager davantage les bénéficiaires de ce programme à entrer sur le marché du travail. Par exemple, nous avons porté à 600 \$ par mois le montant maximal pour les frais de services informels de garde d'enfants.

Pour répondre à la question de la députée, ceci veut dire qu'une mère célibataire, ayant un enfant de six ans, qui gagne 1 500 \$ par mois et qui demande les deux montants maximaux, touchera désormais 452 \$ de revenu de plus par mois. C'est une énorme différence, qui améliorera le niveau de vie de milliers de personnes et de leur famille.

Nous continuerons à chercher des façons d'aider les personnes handicapées à entrer sur le marché du travail et avoir une meilleure qualité de vie.

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question today is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. It's about outstanding order paper questions. Minister, in late June you received five questions that should be simple for your ministry to answer. You've had all summer to prepare the answers, and last week we were informed that the answers would not come until on or about December 15, the day after the House is scheduled to adjourn. Minister, you should be ashamed of yourself for this blatant attempt to cover up information.

Like Bill 107, you are muzzling Parliament. Not only do you not answer questions in question period, now you don't have the courage to answer order paper questions when the House is sitting. Minister, can you explain to the citizens of Ontario why you can't answer order paper questions that were tabled six months ago?

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I thank the member for his question. I don't know the order papers that he's referring to, but I will certainly look into it and guarantee the member that I will get a response for him.

Mr. Dunlop: If that is the case, I hope you will be able to get that answer by the end of this week. Many of the questions involve the costs associated with Caledonia. They included how the funding was allocated for the 1,000 police officers in the province because, as you know, the Ontario Provincial Police received not one of those police officers unless they were under municipal contract policing. Those are the kinds of questions we wanted answered. We didn't want to see this House run until December 15 and then prorogue, and you not ever having to answer the questions. Minister, can we expect those by the end of this week?

Hon. Mr. Kwinter: Now that you've given me an idea of the kinds of questions you're asking, I can understand why you didn't get the answers. Just so you'll know, when we talk about Caledonia, we have tabled the ballpark figure on that. We are in the middle of the fiscal year; we don't have them broken down to that point.

The other thing is about funding for the OPP officers. As you correctly said, those who are under municipal

contract were included, but for us to include funding for officers who are already covered in our budget is like taking the money out of one pocket and putting it in the other. We are already funding them 100%, so why would we provide money to fund them additionally?

Now I understand why those questions haven't been answered.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): My question is to the Premier. Last week in Thunder Bay, you announced your long-awaited policy on electricity pricing for the forestry sector. Since then, Tembec has announced an indefinite closure of their sawmill in Timmins, putting 150 people out of work in that mill, plus those people who work in the woodlands. In Gogama, all 48 workers at that local mill have been basically given an eight- to 10-week layoff. And Bowater, the very day you made your electricity announcement, sent a letter out to its employees saying that despite your announcement, employees can still expect a lot of layoffs.

Premier, my question is simply this: Will you finally admit that (1) your energy policies have failed the forestry sector, and (2) your recent announcement, last week, in Thunder Bay is woefully inadequate to respond to the crisis that you created in the forestry sector?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy): Last week's announcement, which brought the level of provincial support to the forestry sector to more than \$1 billion, was an important announcement that was welcomed in many parts of the industry.

This government has acknowledged from the beginning that that is a sector that is in difficulty. I think the member himself has acknowledged that there are factors well beyond the price of electricity that have impacted on that sector. We remain committed to working with all the communities in Ontario, particularly those in northern Ontario that have experienced the most difficulty as a result of the situation that sector has found itself in, as well as communities in southern Ontario that have been impacted by the challenges that industry faces.

Last week's announcement of \$140 million, on top of the previous \$900 million, is designed to assist the industry to move forward into the future, a future that we acknowledge has many challenges. But this government will continue to work with the forest sector and with the people of northern Ontario to ensure that—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Bisson: Minister, nobody's buying it in northern Ontario. Last week I was in Espanola and Nairn Centre. This morning I was at Bowater, meeting with workers, along with Charlie Angus, my federal member, and they're not buying it. They're saying that all they see are the layoffs; all they see are community leaders and others across northern Ontario reaching out to your government

saying, "We want to work with you at finding solutions." They called on you to do something very direct, and that was a northern Ontario energy policy that reflects the true cost of power in northern Ontario. I was with those workers at Bowater this morning, and they've asked me to come back here and ask you again: Will you finally listen and will you do what northerners have asked you to do, and that is to create a northern Ontario energy pricing system that would help our industry get back on its feet?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: The industrial price of electricity is now lower today than it was when we took office. I would remind the member opposite that both he and his leader in the past have opposed regional prices.

We commissioned Navigant to do a study and found out that what that member is proposing could lead to a higher price for electricity in northern Ontario, which not only would not assist matters but would indeed set it back.

I'd remind the member what he himself said in this House on March 3, 2005, with reference to electricity: "Yes, there are other issues out there. I'm not going to stand here and say it's only electricity, because we know it's partly the low American dollar; it's partly the regulations—for example, some of the regulations around the environment..."

This government has responded to each of the recommendations in the task force that were brought forward. The policy that we have implemented on energy has reduced the industrial cost to where it was when we took office. We're going to continue to pursue those types of policies.

COMMUNITY USE OF SCHOOLS

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): My question is to the Minister of Education. Minister, we promised that we would create stronger communities when we came into government, and we have delivered this promise in many ways. The McGuinty government understands that Ontario's schools are a key part of having strong communities and that they are much more than a building for teaching and learning. We know that after schools are finished for the day, many school buildings do not sit empty; they play host to Scouts, Girl Guides, basketball players, youth groups, senior groups and adult learners.

During the Tory years, there were so many education cutbacks in the classroom that school boards had to gain extra funds by charging for their grounds and facilities to community groups like the ones I've just mentioned. With the increase in costs to use facilities, community groups had to increase registration costs, resulting in new barriers to participation in community programs.

The McGuinty government put an end to this. We're keeping the doors open to the community. Minister, can you tell this House more about the community use of schools program?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): It was a great pleasure on Saturday to join the Minister of

Health Promotion in Ottawa—the enthusiastic Minister of Health Promotion, I might add, even though, in a game of two-on-two soccer, we lost to Emma and Tiffany at St. Paul's school. But there you go.

What we were able to say on Saturday was that our government is committed to ongoing funding of community use of schools. The \$20 million that we've put into the system for the last couple of years has borne fruit. Thirty-six per cent of boards have been able to totally eliminate fees for the use of double gymnasias for community groups and for youth; a significant reduction in the hourly Saturday custodial rates, with 56% of boards being able to totally eliminate those fees.

What we know is that in this country we need community spaces, we need town squares, we need places where community groups and youth can partake in activities, they can be part of organizations. They won't be able to afford to have those kids involved if the fees are so high. That's why we're putting \$20 million on an annual basis—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

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Mr. McNeely: Thank you, Minister. It was very nice to have you in Ottawa this past weekend.

It's clear that our government is on the side of Ontario's families who want affordable access to quality facilities. Minister, with Statistics Canada reporting that as a society obesity and a lack of physical activity are a persistent issue, what has your ministry done to expand the physical fitness and healthy habits of students and all Ontarians?

Hon. Ms. Wynne: Minister of Health Promotion.

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): I want to thank the member for Ottawa—Orléans and my colleague the Honourable Kathleen Wynne for coming to my riding and visiting Saint Paul's secondary school.

To put in perspective what the community use of schools does to help with fitness and wellness, prior to this program, to rent a gymnasium in the school was \$10.42 an hour. Now, on average in Ottawa that goes down to \$1.37. We are very proud of this program. It's removing economic barriers for groups—Cubs and Scouts and Guides and floor hockey and basketball leagues—to use these facilities. We also have the \$10-million healthy eating and active living strategy that we've launched. This Wednesday and Thursday—members of the House will want to know about the first-ever Healthy Eating and Active Living Conference, an international conference our ministry is sponsoring. We have the Honourable Roy Romanow and Dr. Andrew Pipe as two of the keynote speakers. Over 600 people have registered to participate. We've had to cut off registration because of capacity problems. It's a great success: medical officers of health, sport and recreation folks from all over the province, coming, listening and learning. We look forward—

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. New question.

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie—Lincoln): A question to the Premier: Premier, as you know, in about six weeks' time, January 1, 2007, under a federal government program, pensioners will be able to split pension income among both spouses. For example, to a retired police officer or firefighter with pension income of some \$40,000 per year, this will work out to substantial tax savings of some \$2,500. I think the Premier full well knows that the provincial share of that sum is about \$500. The worry that retired police officers, retired firefighters, retired pensioners of all walks of life are concerned with is that the Dalton McGuinty government's appetite for tax hikes will cause this money to be clawed back, that that full benefit will not be transferred because Dalton McGuinty wants to take that money away. Premier, please tell us that's not the case, that you will allow these tax savings to go back to retired pensioners across the province of Ontario.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I know that the member opposite had the opportunity to raise this with the Minister of Finance, and I know that the Minister of Finance answered it in his usual fulsome way.

Let me say that the member opposite is mistaken in his assertion that somehow what we plan to do on this side of the House is going to have an adverse effect on the people of Ontario. We intend to work wherever possible with the federal government. We intend to do whatever we can to ensure that we grow a stronger and still more prosperous economy.

PETITIONS

LANDFILL

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark—Carleton): “Whereas there is currently a proposal to more than double the size of the Carp landfill in west Ottawa; and

“Whereas this site has been in operation for some 30 years and had been expected to close in 2010; and

“Whereas the surrounding community has grown rapidly for the past 10 years and is continuing to grow; and

“Whereas other options to an expanded landfill have yet to be considered; and

“Whereas the municipal councillors representing this area, Eli El-Chantiry ... and Peggy Feltmate, and the MPP, Norm Sterling, all oppose this expansion;

“We, the undersigned, support our local representatives and petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure that the Minister of the Environment does not approve the expansion of the Carp landfill and instead finds other waste management alternatives.”

I have signed it because I'm in agreement with that.

NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT SUPPLEMENT

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I have a petition here from the Canadian Federation of University Women, Leaside–East York branch. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the national child benefit supplement was created to reduce the depth of poverty across Canada for low-income families earning less than \$35,000;

“Whereas the government of Ontario claws back the supplement from families receiving income from Ontario Works or the Ontario disability support plan;

“Whereas Premier McGuinty decried the discriminatory nature of the NCBS clawback and vowed to end this practice in his first mandate;

“Whereas the government of Ontario has failed to end the clawback for those families on OW or ODSP;

“We, the undersigned from CFUW Ontario Council, petition the Legislative Assembly to end the clawback of the national child benefit supplement.”

I am in accord with this, will affix my signature thereto, and send it down with page Sarah.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It's signed by a number of people from all over Mississauga and Oakville and Brampton. It's about cross-border travel between the United States and Canada. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the United States government, through the western hemisphere travel initiative, is proposing that US citizens will require a passport or single-purpose travel card to cross the Canada-US border; and

“Whereas a passport or single-purpose travel card would be an added expense, and the inconvenience of having to apply for and carry a new document would be a barrier for many Canadian and US cross-border travellers; and

“Whereas the George Bush government proposal could mean a loss of as many as 3.5 million US visitors to Ontario, and place in peril as many as 7,000 jobs in the Ontario tourism industry by 2008, many of which are valuable entry jobs for youth and new Canadians; and

“Whereas many of the US states bordering Canada have expressed similar concerns regarding the punitive economic impact of this plan, and both states and provinces along the US-Canada border recognize that the importance of the safe and efficient movement of people across that border is vital to the economies of both countries;

“Be it therefore resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario support the establishment of a bi-national group to establish an alternative to the proposed US border requirements, and inform Prime Minister Harper that his decision not to advocate on behalf of Ontarians is

ill-advised and contrary to the responsibilities of elected representatives in Canada.”

This is an excellent petition. I'm pleased to affix my signature and to ask page Shannon to carry it.

NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT SUPPLEMENT

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): I'm very pleased to submit these petitions on behalf of the Canadian Federation of University Women in Kitchener–Waterloo and in Owen Sound and area and in Sarnia–Lambton.

“Whereas the national child benefit supplement was created to reduce the depth of poverty across Canada for low-income families earning less than \$35,000;

“Whereas the government of Ontario claws back the supplement from families receiving income from Ontario Works or the Ontario disability support plan;

“Whereas Premier McGuinty decried the discriminatory nature of the NCBS clawback and vowed to end this practice in his first mandate;

“Whereas the government of Ontario has failed to end the clawback for those families on OW or ODSP;

“We, the undersigned from CFUW Ontario Council, petition the Legislative Assembly to end the clawback of the national child benefit supplement.”

I'm pleased to add my name.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I have several hundred signatures on a petition put together by the Canadian Federation of University Women from their clubs in Hamilton, Stratford, Oakville and Mississauga. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads:

“Whereas the national child benefit supplement was created to reduce the depth of poverty across Canada for low-income families earning less than \$35,000;

“Whereas the government of Ontario claws back the supplement from families receiving income from Ontario Works or the Ontario disability support plan;

“Whereas Premier McGuinty decried the discriminatory nature of the NCBS clawback and vowed to end this practice in his first mandate;

“Whereas the government of Ontario has failed to end the clawback for those families on OW or ODSP;

“We, the undersigned from CFUW Ontario Council, petition the Legislative Assembly to end the clawback of the national child benefit supplement.”

I agree with this and send it down to the table by page Eshan.

FAIR ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS

Mr. Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay–Atikokan): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly about access to trades and professions in Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise

their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

“Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent, arbitrary and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

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“Whereas action by Ontario’s trades and professions could remove many such barriers, but Ontario’s trades and professions have failed to recognize that such structural barriers exist, much less to take action to remove them, and to provide fair, timely, transparent and cost-effective access to trades and professions for new Canadians trained outside Canada;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Ontario Legislative Assembly urge the members of all parties to swiftly pass Bill 124, the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006, and to require Ontario’s regulated professions and trades to review and modify their procedures and qualification requirements to swiftly meet the needs of Ontario’s employers, Ontario’s newcomers and their own membership, all of whom desperately need the very skills new Canadians bring working for their organizations, for their trades and professions, and for their families.”

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean–Carleton): “Whereas Longfields and Davidson Heights in south Nepean are some of the fastest growing communities in Ottawa and Ontario; and

“Whereas the Ottawa–Carleton District School Board has voted to authorize the final design phases for a grade 7 to 12 school to serve the Longfields and Davidson Heights communities; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario has lifted a three-year moratorium on school closings in order to make way for new educational facilities;

“We, residents of Nepean–Carleton, petition the Parliament of Ontario to ensure that the Ottawa–Carleton District School Board continues with plans to build a new grade 7 to 12 school no later than autumn of 2008 to serve the Longfields and Davidson Heights communities.”

Myself, along with Farley Mowat—the Farley Mowat—as well as school board trustees and local city councillors have all signed this petition. Therefore, I affix my signature.

NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT SUPPLEMENT

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition that has been sent to me by the Canadian Federation of

University Women, the Sudbury chapter, and I want to thank them. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the national child benefit supplement was created to reduce the depth of poverty across Canada for low-income families earning less than \$35,000;

“Whereas the government of Ontario claws back the supplement from families receiving income from Ontario Works or the Ontario disability support plan;

“Whereas Premier McGuinty decried the discriminatory nature of the NCBS clawback and vowed to end this practice in his first mandate;

“Whereas the government of Ontario has failed to end the clawback for those families on OW or ODSP;

“We, the undersigned from CFUW Ontario council, petition the Legislative Assembly to end the clawback of the national child benefit supplement.”

I agree with the petitioners, and I affix my signature to this.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): “Whereas the national child benefit supplement was created to reduce the depth of poverty across Canada for low-income families earning less than \$35,000;

“Whereas the government of Ontario claws back the supplement from families receiving income from Ontario Works or the Ontario disability support plan;

“Whereas Premier McGuinty decried the discriminatory nature of the NCBS clawback and vowed to end this practice in his first mandate;

“Whereas the government of Ontario has failed to end the clawback for those families on OW or ODSP;

“We, the undersigned from CFUW Ontario council, petition the Legislative Assembly to end the clawback of the national child benefit supplement.”

I’m pleased to sign this petition, as I agree with it.

COMMUNITY MEDIATION

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The member for Mississauga West, to correct the rotation.

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): Thank you very much, Speaker. I appreciate that. I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It has been signed by a number of residents of Meadowvale in north Mississauga, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas many types of civil disputes may be resolved through community mediation delivered by trained mediators, who are volunteers working with the parties in the dispute; and

“Whereas Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services established the Peel Community Mediation Service in 1999 with support from the government of Ontario through the Trillium Foundation, the Rotary Club of Mississauga West and the United Way of Peel, and has proven the viability and success of community mediation; and

“Whereas the city of Mississauga and the town of Caledon have endorsed the Peel Community Mediation Service, and law enforcement bodies refer many cases to

the Peel Community Mediation Service as an alternative to a court dispute; and

"Whereas court facilities and court time are both scarce and expensive, the cost of community mediation is very small and the extra expense incurred for lack of community mediation in Peel region would be much greater than the small annual cost of funding community mediation;

"Be it therefore resolved that the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of the Attorney General, support and fund the ongoing service delivery of the Peel Community Mediation Service through Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services."

I'm pleased to affix my signature in support of this petition and to ask page Eshan to carry it.

NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT SUPPLEMENT

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of the Canadian Federation of University Women, Etobicoke branch. The petition reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the national child benefit supplement was created to reduce the depth of poverty across Canada for low-income families earning less than \$35,000;

"Whereas the government of Ontario claws back the supplement from families receiving income from Ontario Works or the Ontario disability support plan;

"Whereas Premier McGuinty decried the discriminatory nature of the NCBS clawback and vowed to end this practice in his first mandate;

"Whereas the government of Ontario has failed to end the clawback for those families on Ontario Works or ODSP;

"We, the undersigned from CFUW, Ontario council, petition the Legislative Assembly to end the clawback of the national child benefit supplement."

I agree with this petition. I affix my signature and I pass it to page Shannon to bring forward.

COMMUNITY MEDIATION

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly supporting community mediation.

"Whereas many types of civil disputes may be resolved through community mediation delivered by trained mediators, who are volunteers working with the parties in the dispute; and

"Whereas Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services established the Peel Community Mediation Service in 1999 with support from the government of Ontario through the Trillium Foundation, the Rotary Club of Mississauga West and the United Way of Peel, and has proven the viability and success of community mediation; and

"Whereas the city of Mississauga and the town of Caledon have endorsed the Peel Community Mediation Service, and law enforcement bodies refer many cases to the Peel Community Mediation Service as an alternative to a court dispute; and

"Whereas court facilities and court time are both scarce and expensive, the cost of community mediation is very small and the extra expense incurred for lack of community mediation in Peel region would be much greater than the small annual cost of funding community mediation;

"Be it therefore resolved that the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of the Attorney General, support and fund the ongoing service delivery of the Peel Community Mediation Service through Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services."

I'll affix my signature to it.

PEDESTRIAN WALKWAY

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a petition signed by hundreds of Port Sydney residents to do with the dam at Port Sydney. It says:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the dam at Mary Lake has historically provided a pedestrian walkway for use by the community and visitors since the dam's construction; and

"Whereas the walkway provides a vital link and a tourist attraction for the community of Port Sydney; and

"Whereas restricting access to the walkway would result in pedestrian use of the roadway where motor vehicle traffic poses a danger to pedestrians; and

"Whereas closure of the pedestrian walkway across the dam is inconsistent with other provincial government programs, including Ontario's action plan for healthy eating and active living and the Trails for Life program, both of which promote active lifestyles; and

"Whereas all ministries should strive to encourage and support healthy lifestyles;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Natural Resources continue to permit the use of the pedestrian walkway over Mary Lake dam indefinitely."

I support this petition and affix my signature to it

CONSIDERATION OF BILL 65

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Before you get to orders of the day, Mr. Speaker, I have a unanimous consent that I would like to seek. I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice concerning this afternoon's debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to move a motion without notice concerning today's business. Agreed? Agreed.

Orders of the day.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: No, I'll give the motion first. I move that for the purposes of this afternoon's debate on the motion for third reading of Bill 65, up to 43 minutes be allotted to each recognized party and that when the time allotted for debate has expired, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the bill and that the Speaker shall then adjourn the House without question put.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Bradley has moved—dispense? Dispense.

Orders of the day. Wait, wait. I'm trying to hurry this too much today. I'm in a hurry, I guess, to move along with the motion.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Now we're ready for orders of the day.

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ORDERS OF THE DAY

MORTGAGE BROKERAGES, LENDERS AND ADMINISTRATORS ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 SUR LES MAISONS DE COURTAGE D'HYPOTHÈQUES, LES PRÊTEURS HYPOTHÉCAIRES ET LES ADMINISTRATEURS D'HYPOTHÈQUES

Mr. Arthurs, on behalf of Mr. Sorbara, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 65, An Act respecting mortgage brokerages, lenders and administrators / Projet de loi 65, Loi concernant les maisons de courtage d'hypothèques, les prêteurs hypothécaires et les administrateurs d'hypothèques.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge): I'm very pleased and proud today to be able to rise in the Legislature for the third reading debate in respect to Bill 65 in my capacity as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance.

I want to just take a moment or so to let the Legislature know that the Minister of Finance does send his regrets at not being here this afternoon to be able to lead this debate off. He certainly wanted to be here, he feels this is an important piece of legislation in the context of our financial regulatory regime here in the province, but he is today in Hamilton on part of his pre-budget consultation tour that the minister undertakes for his benefit, not unlike the consultations that the standing committee of all three parties will be undertaking very shortly on the budget. That particular pre-budget consultation the minister had scheduled some time ago. Thus, that couldn't be rescheduled for him to be here in the Legislature today.

Regardless, in his absence I want to take a few minutes to talk a little bit about how important we believe this particular legislation is and how I'm hopeful that we'll have the support of all the members on the changes

being proposed as they relate to the mortgage business as proposed in Bill 65.

As I said, this is a significant piece of legislation. It's not one that's probably terribly high-profile in many ways with the public, with consumers, that they're chomping at the bit to see pass, but given the nature of that business, nonetheless it is significant and important. If it's passed, it will replace a piece of legislation, the Mortgage Brokers Act, which was put into legislation 30-plus years ago, in the 1970s—in effect, almost 35 years ago. Today, some 30-plus years since then, the financial services landscape here in the province of Ontario is markedly different than it was then. Increasing numbers of homebuyers are relying on the services of mortgage brokers to help them with their borrowing needs. More than one quarter of purchases that are being made are seeking out the services of a mortgage broker.

Today's purchasers, in my view, are far more curious and better informed than those of 35 years ago regarding the multitude of choices that might be available to them, whether that be through the more traditional chartered bank lending regime or the services provided by mortgage brokers and that industry. I would venture to say that there's still probably, in some, a hesitancy to venture into that marketplace as it's not as widely known or as well known because there's some sense that other lending institutions that have a national profile may be better positioned to serve the consumer. That's far from necessarily the case. The options and opportunities to seek out lending from a variety of sources are much greater today, and that puts us in a certain position and obligation to ensure that we have a regulatory, licensing and educational regime that will do two things, at the very least: It will protect the consumer, provide the consumer with broader opportunities, and enhance the professionalism of the industry overall.

Mortgage brokers range from pretty large and sophisticated operations, frankly, to single-owner operators in small operations. Mortgage agents comprise a key segment, though, of Ontario's mortgage industry. A Mortgage Brokers Act that dates back to the 1970s is, without doubt, no longer adequate for today's marketplace. Clearly, probably in each legislative time frame, each mandate that a government has, are pieces of legislation that it's important and appropriate to bring forward to update, renew and make current. I think this is one opportunity, one of a number of pieces that this government in this particular mandate has the opportunity to influence; that's an older piece of legislation.

The thrust of our new proposed legislation is to develop a comprehensive and streamlined system of rules that will govern mortgage brokers and their agents and provide a much higher level of public confidence in both the capacity of those individuals to undertake the work they are doing on their behalf and also a higher degree of assurance that they're regulated and operate in a fair and responsible manner.

The Mortgage Brokerages, Lenders and Administrators Act would do a number of things. Certainly, we

are looking to improve consumer protection. We're looking to enhance and modernize the overall financial regulatory framework. Key, we're trying to encourage, as we should, greater competition and broader choice for consumers. That broader choice might range anywhere from what one might consider the traditional, "Can I get a better interest rate on my mortgage?" to issues around the term of a mortgage, the length of amortization, the capacity to opt out of a mortgage at a particular point in time, pay-down provisions on mortgages, variable rate mortgage opportunities: the types of initiatives that we have become increasingly familiar with in the past few years primarily on the banking side, primarily in those institutions that have the broad market range. We want to ensure that mortgage brokers and lenders are fully knowledgeable, educated, trained and certified in providing the type of advice around this multitude of options to consumers.

It's an important part of our government's plan to improve Ontario's economic advantage generally. Part of that comes with informing consumers about other opportunities, educating consumers and supporting a new generation of economic growth through modernizing financial services regulations generally.

We've made a lot of progress on other fronts. We certainly did a lot of work and the early slugging on the insurance file as part of that financial regulatory framework. This is another big piece of it. As we talk about the mortgage brokers and lenders, there's ongoing consultation currently with credit unions and caisses populaires about, again, legislation that's currently somewhat dated, that needs renewal as well. I know the Minister of Finance is hopeful and optimistic that we'll be able to bring some matters forward before this Legislature that would begin to deal with those matters effectively as well.

Before I go into some of the detail of the proposed act, at least on a semi-detailed level, I'd like to outline how we got to the decision to do something about the Mortgage Brokers Act and where we are at today here at the beginning of third reading. I'm sure you're familiar with some of this information—the second reading debate. It's interesting to note—and I'll be mentioning the consultation process, but nonetheless—the first reading occurred on February 20 of this year, and we effectively managed to move to second reading by September 28 of this year. With our winter and summer breaks, that's a fairly expeditious process. Here we are at the end of November in third reading and, if the House agrees, we will be able to complete this process in a relatively short period of time from a legislative time frame. It bears repeating, however, because it's a great example of how open, transparent and accessible this process has been and of the success that we have when we have these open processes and ones that are transparent and we seek out consultation that characterizes good governance, that works for the people in the province of Ontario.

Reforming mortgage brokers legislation began with our first budget. Minister Sorbara introduced that concept

in 2004, when he announced the intention to introduce a new Mortgage Brokers Act. In June 2004, there was the release of the first consultation paper for broad public comment. In the fall of that year, the Minister of Finance hosted a briefing of the stakeholders, and the Honourable Mike Colle, then the parliamentary assistant to the minister, chaired a series of round-table meetings with a range of stakeholders in regard to this particular matter.

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Subsequently, a consultation draft of the proposed act and draft licensing regulations were released in March 2005. The ministry, on the staff side, then hosted a technical briefing of stakeholders to get down to the nitty-gritty parts of it. Some 50-plus written submissions on the consultation draft were received, which added valuable insights into the drafting of the legislation and some of the constraints that one might find. The proposed Mortgage Brokers, Lenders and Administrators Act, 2006, was developed out of this extensive public consultation and, quite frankly, it has extensive support among the stakeholders.

That consultation didn't stop at that point in time. After Bill 65 went through second reading, it was brought to committee. At the hearings, stakeholders were once again provided an opportunity to provide feedback and voice any remaining concerns they had in regard to the legislation.

We heard, during those committee hearings, from the Canadian Institute of Mortgage Brokers and Lenders, CIMBL, which is probably the single most significant stakeholder in the business and provided the most valuable of inputs during that process. We also heard from the Independent Mortgage Brokers Association of Ontario. So we had not one view from mortgage brokers associations, but at the very least two views of two organizations serving a similar function but maybe coming at the issues in a slightly different way. We heard from the Canadian Life and Health Insurance Association. We heard from Primerica Financial Services, because it affects the way they do their business. We heard from the Ontario Bar Association, the Law Society of Upper Canada and the Canadian Bankers Association, as well as the Ontario Real Estate Association.

So you can see from that that among the range of people we heard from, either through committee or as stakeholders having input into the ministry briefings and consultations, or the consultations that were held by the then parliamentary assistant, the Honourable Mike Colle, or through the representations I've had in my office, having taken on the role as the parliamentary assistant, the consultations have been extensive. I know that the stakeholders outreached to the opposition parties as well to apprise them of the concerns and interest they had in this matter. Certainly, that was most evident during our committee hearings, and I must say during debate, when matters raised by members on all sides reflected the level of consultation that occurred and the issues that were being raised during that period of time.

Among these various organizations there was representation from virtually all the organizations involved

in mortgage brokering in Ontario, whether it was on the lending side, the sale of property side or on the regime that manages that process on behalf of the consumer in the form of legal advice, being the principal stakeholders from whom we heard the most. Their input was tremendously valuable, both from the political side in assisting the minister in finalizing the legislation and the ministry staff in developing the legislation. Without that level of consultation, the legislation as presented would not have received the degree of broad support that it has.

The government chose not to stop at that point. At the subsequent clause-by-clause review of Bill 65 that we had during the hearings, after hearing from the various stakeholders, we worked with the members opposite to accept what we think is a very important amendment to the legislation. The amendment has made it an offence for mortgage brokers, lenders or administrators to "give, assist in giving or induce or counsel another person or entity to give or assist in giving any false or deceptive information or document" when dealing in trading in mortgages in Ontario. That may seem a little convoluted, but it's not really. Simply put, the amendment has made willing participation in mortgage fraud on the part of mortgage brokers and/or agents an offence.

In October of this year, the Honourable Gerry Phillips, our Minister of Government Services, introduced Bill 152. That particular piece of legislation would ensure property owners neither lose their homes as a result of real estate fraud nor become responsible for fraudulent mortgages. Certainly, all members on all sides have had discussions to this point, whether it be in question period or on a private member's bill or government bills, on this matter of mortgage fraud.

We thought that the amendment, as presented by members opposite, was an important inclusion, an important enhancement to the legislation, and we're pleased, following the discussion we had there, to be able to support its inclusion as a further entrenchment of the need to provide security to those involved in the acquiring of mortgages that those they were dealing with would be held to account if they acted in some fashion that would put the lender at any risk. We certainly appreciate the members opposite for adding this prohibition against the provision of either false or misleading statements. That addition to Bill 65 is welcome. It has made the consumer protection measures included within the act even better for Ontarians.

The work that has been done on this new act, from the first mention of it in the budget bill of 2004 through to our third reading debate being led off today and the drafting of the regulations, is a tremendous example of our willingness to work with and for the people of this great province. The transparent process by which we prepared this legislation will help ensure that it works for the people, that it works for the businesses that are in the business of providing mortgages and that it works generally for the economy of this great province.

This act, as I mentioned, has the support of a variety of stakeholders. I would venture to say that it has the

support of all the stakeholders. There may be some tweaking and variations, where one stakeholder may not be 100% happy with every part of it, but we heard strongly from the stakeholders that not only was the direction right but that we've included many of the elements that the stakeholders felt were important to them. This includes the consumers, the lenders and the brokerage industry. All of them have certainly been in support of an overhaul of the current legislation, and they were asking for this matter to be dealt with. They recognize that a sound regulatory climate is absolutely critical to ensuring the continued confidence of borrowers and lenders, which is necessary to make financial markets work and certainly to make the real estate market work, which is such an important part of the economy of the province of Ontario.

We're delivering on an early budget commitment to build a strong economy and a culture of transparency and accountability to the people.

The proposed new act that we're debating today doesn't signal the end of our commitment to updating the regulation of the mortgage brokering industry. There's still the matter of the regulations. As you know, the legislation will put in place the framework for the balance of the efforts, that regulatory part of the regime that really results in the implementation of any piece of legislation.

Draft regulations and draft investor-lender disclosure forms were released for consultation recently. They've also been posted on the Ministry of Finance website for anyone who would care to review them. The issue of disclosure has been an important part of the overall discussion.

The draft regulations to be consulted on at this time concern a variety of things. They certainly include the matter of exemptions, and I'll take a moment or so to talk about those.

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We heard, as I said, from the legal field. We heard from the accounting field. We heard from the chartered banking part of the industry. Clearly, there are those who have training and skills that they've acquired through their professional development, whether that be a lawyer who may very well have dealt with matters that would be included in the mortgage brokerage business. We heard from the accounting field, because clearly they have a set of skills that would be applicable to mortgage brokering. We heard from those in the real estate business, who already have the mortgage brokerage designation should they choose to pursue that. And we certainly heard from the major financial institutions that are federally regulated and thus have their own set of rules and laws governing how they function but also a very complex and comprehensive set of structures in place to deal with mortgages. All of those groups expressed a concern and an interest that as we develop the regulatory framework, the educational framework, we take into account the skills that they have, the knowledge they have, in applying those.

Thus, as the regulations are being drafted and consulted on, we'll be looking obviously at where there are appropriate exemptions in whole, if that be the case, or certainly in part where it's appropriate. We're looking at a variety, within the regulations, of the regulated kinds of activities: What are the types of things that we're going to directly manage? We want to look at the standards of practice: What is it that we're going to be asking brokerages to do? Where is the bar going to be set for the ethical operation of a brokerage? What's the nature of their business? Certainly the brokerage will have lots of opportunity to comment on those standards of practice.

We've incorporated a new concept: Each of the brokerages will have to have a principal broker. They'll have to have one broker in charge, someone who will ultimately accept the responsibility for the function of the brokerage, the brokers and the agents who might work within that; someone, at the end of the day, at the top of the food chain, in essence, in that business who will be accountable if there's a need to find that direct accountability. We've had good support from the industry on the issue of establishing the principal broker's duties.

We're looking closely, obviously, at the licensing of agents. Probably we won't be as familiar with the current regime where someone who has a mortgage brokerage licence will be able, effectively, to hire staff and appoint them as agents with no real formal training, necessarily. They may have some good administrative skills, they may actually understand the business, but they're not required to have a formalized educational and training and licensing regime. We don't think that's appropriate in a marketplace where more than one quarter of people are using mortgage brokers and, I dare to say, probably as many may very well be seeking out mortgage brokers as an option to the more traditional banking environment for seeking mortgages. One would anticipate and expect that the mortgage brokerage industry may see more than its current 25%-plus of business moving in their direction in the years ahead.

Further regulations are to be released at a later point in time, albeit not too much further in the distance. We've seen, from the timing on this bill, once we managed to complete the consultations, draft the legislation and actually bring it forward, that it's moved in a fairly expeditious fashion. I'm confident that we're going to be able to, with the stakeholders and with the ministry staff, move the regulations forward in a fairly efficient and effective manner. They'll certainly include additional materials concerning the standards of practice for the administrators of mortgages, for the brokers and for their agents.

We've espoused the principles, as I said earlier, of openness and transparency thus far and we have no intention of stopping now. Stakeholders are being given the opportunity to comment on the draft regulations, to suggest amendments to those regulations, certainly to add their voice and opinion; in other words, do what they've been doing ever since the process of drawing up this act first began with the introduction of the concept in the minister's budget of 2004.

Another related example of our work with the stakeholders involves the rather comprehensive review of the educational requirements for the mortgage broker industry in Ontario. This has been spearheaded by FSCO, which here in this House we know as the Financial Services Commission of Ontario. A consultation paper on the educational requirements was released on August 31, 2006, and included an examination of various course offerings that are currently available, the delivery mechanisms for educational opportunities, and equivalencies for other professionals and those who might be out-of-province applicants. I already mentioned earlier the issue of lawyers, accountants and those with other skill-set training and that we have to be cognizant of the skills they already have in developing educational requirements, but more importantly in ensuring that we're not duplicating effort in the process.

The aim was to ensure that the industry participants have a level of competency appropriate to their roles and responsibilities. For most of us the taking out of a mortgage, the purchasing of a home and in some cases the establishment of a business are probably among the most important financial decisions we will make, because often it's two, three and four or more times during the course of a professional working life that one might consider taking out a mortgage. When we consider that level of investment, particularly in today's marketplace, when probably the average house in the greater Golden Horseshoe is \$250,000, \$300,000-plus—in Toronto much more; in some areas somewhat less—if you look at a family that maybe has three or four homes in their lifetime, it's not hard to see where \$1 million in transactions for an individual family is occurring. One wants to ensure that those participating in this business have the competencies for the responsibilities in the role they're being asked to undertake on behalf of the consumer.

The consultation concluded just last month and was instrumental in maintaining an open, transparent and somewhat informal discussion regarding the regulation of mortgage agents and brokers. It's not only the formal part. I think the informal part of the consultation is important, particularly with the stakeholder groups that have offered their advice continuously through the process to improve the thinking along the way, and it's been a two-way street.

A new educational program is expected to be developed for 2007. We can't yet be sure of the exact time in 2007, but that's our target. In updating and modernizing the act, the goal remains to ensure that everyone involved in mortgage brokering is knowledgeable about what they're doing and proficient in the business they've chosen to engage in.

We want to ensure that they meet educational standards and will be regulated in the same way. We want a uniform standard in the mortgage brokering industry which would enhance both consumer protection and consumer confidence. That, in turn, certainly benefits not only the industry but, equally important, the consumer.

Stakeholders are supportive of the proposed proficiency standards for the agents and brokers. There are

some different perspectives on the competency and delivery of the education requirements. Not everyone is 100% on exactly the same page as we speak. For example, there is one train of thought that looks to a standard exam and standardized curriculum throughout the province for this industry. There are others who endorse a system where we may have multiple curricula, seeking a very similar, or the same, output but not necessarily exactly the same class or informational structure. There will be others who would support a multiple-curricular system with a standard provincial exam but maybe only at the broker level, not necessarily for all of the agents. Where there is a higher level of responsibility, the standardization of the exam process ensures some stability, particularly when we talk about principal brokers. When we get to that level, we want to ensure that there is a standardization, as one view, across the province of Ontario.

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So there are still some variations on a theme, the theme being that we need an educational regime that develops competencies that may not otherwise be in place, and we need a testing mechanism that ensures that those competencies are actually in place.

Now, I haven't mentioned the delivery model in particular, but clearly in today's age things are different than they were 30 years ago. The tradition of spending X number of months in a classroom in a given environment, given geographic location, might work for a segment of the population interested in this particular initiative, but today's marketplace is different.

We need to recognize that people are carrying on this business in greater numbers, because they have a greater portion of the marketplace, and thus need the opportunity to be trained, have those skill sets, in different parts of the province of Ontario and maybe differing delivery agents. It may be that our college system remains the best suited to be able to deliver on the educational program. It may be that the organizations that represent mortgage brokers have a role to play in the delivery of the program. It may be that some partnership form similar to that might be the best way.

There is also the issue of distance education. Many of our universities, if not all, offer programs that one can do online, on the Internet or by video conferencing. There is no reason that those provisions shouldn't be considered as one develops the educational program to ensure the greatest opportunity for those who want to pursue this avenue of professional development. They shouldn't be denied by virtue of geography or particular time structures.

Those who hold a variety of views around this critically important part of the development of the regulatory regime have had an opportunity to express those opinions and tell us why they think their strategy is the best one suited for those who are entering into or are currently in, but need to upgrade and meet current standards—why they should be implemented in that fashion. That is what the consultation is all about: It's getting the broadest

number of views within a spectrum, taking the best of those and finding how they're going to work effectively, and providing feedback to those who are engaged in it before one comes to a final conclusion.

With the role of mortgage brokers, with the taking of mortgages through mortgage brokers, with the seeking out of those options expanding across the province of Ontario, this is absolutely the right time to modernize Ontario's regulatory framework and to strengthen the consumer and investor protection as it relates to what I often say is the single most important investment of lending that individuals and families do multiple times in their—I want to come back to that and say that it's not the \$250,000, it's not the \$300,000. In many families' cases, we're talking investments of well over a million dollars during their lifetime. In making those choices, we want to ensure they have the best opportunity for not only the best product but the best service that goes with that, with a high degree of confidence.

I've had the opportunity in the amount of time that we have here today to touch on some of the highlights of the legislation, which will replace legislation that is some 30 years old and certainly in need of updating. I know that when we were in committee, there was an interesting amendment proposed by the member from Erie—Lincoln on the naming of the bill. We didn't adopt that, but if he's going to speak to it—I know third reading is the opportunity to change the name of legislation; I think that's how the process works—he may want to comment on that. I think it's fair to say that even if he doesn't, the minister's staff worked very hard on this process and were aptly led by the then executive assistant. I'm not sure what his title was in those days. But certainly he has worked closely with the Honourable Mike Colle in his former life within finance and even as an opposition member. Mr. Arthur Lofsky has been instrumental in working with stakeholders on the political side of the equation, and I want to thank him for the support he's provided to me during my engagement in this, having taken it over some 16 months ago, and carriage for this legislation through this process.

Clearly, after 30 years it's time for this legislation to meet the modern age. I'm standing here and I hear this humming on my hip going off, and that's the BlackBerry as it vibrates.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie—Lincoln): It's supposed to be turned off.

Mr. Arthurs: It's not ringing, it's just vibrating. I'm not answering it, even to read it.

It's a whole new world that we're in when it comes to technology, and shouldn't it be a new world that we're in when it comes to people investing principally in their homes and having opportunities available to them?

I want to re-emphasize that it's my view that we have significant if not complete support from our stakeholders. That includes the consumers and the brokerage industry in the introduction of this piece of legislation and its carriage through to this point in time. I think that has been exhibited through the entire process.

I'm asking all members of the House for their support of the proposed legislation so we can continue the process of finalizing the regulations, getting the educational regime in place and actually getting the full implementation of a new piece of legislation in place to help modernize the financial regulations in Ontario in this particular area and provide the consumer with the confidence and the protection they need so that when they're seeking out their mortgage from organizations that traditionally maybe haven't had the level of confidence that the big banks have had, they will have similar confidence in that industry and can make those choices comfortably; that as they reach out for the broadest of options and explore all of the opportunities, mortgage brokers will be a viable option for them, above and beyond the current marketplace of some 25%-plus of that overall market.

I've been pleased to be a party to this process and have a chance to work with the stakeholders and the staff, and certainly with the members opposite, particularly in committee and during debate on this piece of legislation. I'm hopeful that as we wrap this debate up there will be support for the legislation.

Finally, as I said when I opened up, the minister would dearly have loved to have been here today to address this matter at the beginning of third reading. Those other matters kept him away, but he does feel that it's an important part of the regulatory regime. Any time a government has the opportunity to address legislation that is 30-plus years old and that will meet a modern era standard, that is an important milestone that will stand us in good stead for a long time to come.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for the time today and look forward to the balance of the debate this afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Hudak: I'm pleased to respond upon third reading of Bill 65 on behalf of the official opposition.

I always enjoy the comments of my colleague the member from Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge, who I also want to commend on the way he has handled this bill, both in discussions here in the Ontario Legislature and in the finance committee as well. Through him to the minister and the minister's staff, we were very grateful to have received a copy of the regulations for Bill 65—to be clear, draft regulations. I appreciate that effort from the ministry to make sure that the official opposition critics, Mr. Prue and myself, had an advance copy to consider those regulations.

They have likewise been shared as of Friday, if I understand, with stakeholders—in fact, publicly available to not only the major stakeholders. We call them “major” because they're the ones that were before the committee, for example, or have written to the ministry or to the opposition critics about Bill 65. But they're available not only for stakeholders but for the general public as a whole through the ministry's website for those who are interested in the mortgage brokerage industry.

As I begin, I do want to thank my colleague from Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge for his efforts. It was good to

see that they took the opportunity to send draft regulations around while we are considering third reading of the bill.

Those draft regulations, I believe, are due back January 19, 2007, so some interesting Christmastime reading for those engaged in Bill 65. I think members will recall from the debate here on second reading a number of weeks ago or at committee several weeks ago that pretty well everybody agreed that a lot of the details would be in the regulations. The official opposition was supportive of Bill 65 in second reading. We took a supportive tone as well in committee, and I will be recommending that my colleagues support Bill 65 upon third reading in the Legislature today.

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We will look forward to hearing from stakeholders and interested taxpayers about their views on the regulations that have been presented, as of Friday, to the general public. I will get into those details in a bit, but I do want to make it clear that the official opposition will continue to follow this process. We're pleased to see the open nature of these consultations on Bill 65 and look forward to feedback from concerned parties.

It reminds me a little bit of when I was the consumer and business services minister. We brought forward CP21, consumer protection in the 21st century, which had significant portions that needed consultation among industry stakeholders and taxpayers at large; for example, the funeral services industry. Since the bill was passed in 2002, I believe, unfortunately some regulations still have to be finalized. There have been several rounds back and forth between the ministry staff and interested parties. But I do want to say on a positive note that I have an understanding, from previous experience, that sometimes it does take a great deal of effort from staff both in the minister's office and in the civil service to work on this level of detail, because one or two words in one direction or another, a hyphen or a period in the wrong position, may give a meaning entirely different than what was intended. I think it's important to be careful in that process. We'll look forward to mid- or late January of next year for feedback on the regulations surrounding Bill 65.

I always do like to say that as we address finance bills before the Legislature, we can take them in the context of the finances of the province of Ontario as we stand. I want to reiterate, as I discuss Bill 65, my ongoing concerns and those of the PC caucus about the rate of spending growth of the government as a whole. We have certainly seen an approximately 8% average program spending increase by the Dalton McGuinty government, which leaves in the dust the spending increases of the previous Bob Rae and David Peterson governments. We have also seen a significant increase in taxation that has taken money from the pockets of seniors and hard-working families in the province of Ontario. Ontario is one of the most uncompetitive jurisdictions when it comes to business taxes, I think ranking only second to Saskatchewan in all of North America. If I understand correctly, Saskatchewan is currently reviewing their corporate taxation.

Certainly, when you see approximately 120,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs fleeing the province of Ontario in the last two years, it must give all decision-makers here in the assembly great pause. I do hope that as Bill 65 moves through the legislative process—now, I know there's some ongoing work with the regulations, but perhaps as the minister's and the parliamentary assistant's time is freed up, we'll see some greater activity now, a focus on reducing the burden of taxes on working families, seniors and businesses in our province to kick-start job creation, particularly in the manufacturing sector.

Also on the same topic, you'll remember that I asked the Premier today about income splitting. Income splitting has been proposed by the federal government beginning January 1, 2007. This would allow pension income to be split among both spouses, so by way of example, if you have a retiree with an annual pension income of some \$40,000—this is the example I brought forward to the Premier and the finance minister in consecutive question periods—with a spouse who has no pension income, pension splitting effectively would allow one spouse to declare \$20,000 in income and the other spouse a further \$20,000. The tax savings, as you can imagine, from hitting the lower marginal tax rate are substantial; in fact, I understand about a \$2,500 tax savings to that senior couple with very modest incomes. That modest-income couple is seeing taxes increase; they've seen utility rates increase. Pretty well everything has gone up, aside from their pensions. Ontario's portion of that \$2,500 in that example is \$500. There is concern among retirees and seniors' groups that the intention of the current government is to claw back that \$500. I certainly hope that is not the case, but I would like to hear a direct assurance from the finance minister and his staff here today that they have no intentions whatsoever of doing so and will allow that federal initiative to be passed on fully to Ontario's pension earners.

One of the important reasons for that is that it kicks in January 1, 2007, and this was announced back in October by the federal finance minister, Jim Flaherty. So the time constraints, as you can understand, are relatively tight. I mentioned that Bill 65's regulations are due back January 19. I know work will be done even when the House is not sitting, but I would ask that some attention be devoted to getting an answer to the income-splitting question in advance of the January 1, 2007, implementation of this new tax advantage. My understanding is that if the provincial government determines that it's not going to pass on those tax savings, it effectively means that the tax collection agreement with the federal government will be torn up.

Since 1962, the province of Ontario and the federal government have co-operated on the collection of tax, obviously to save money, to save the administrative costs and to pass on those savings, ideally, to taxpayers. Given that that's been the case since 1962, that also means, by definition, that the term "taxable income" is the same, whether it's the provincial or the federal government.

The federal government's move on allowing for income splitting of pension revenues means that the definition of "disposable income" is changing federally and would therefore have to simultaneously be changed provincially. If Premier McGuinty and the finance minister, Minister Sorbara, decide not to go ahead with that, they would have to declare a different level of taxable income for pension earners than the federal government, which would effectively mean the elimination of the tax collection agreement and untold costs in the Ministry of Finance—the hiring of more staff, a different computer program—in order not to pass on those savings. Some of those savings, I guess, for the provincial government would be clawed back by the additional costs of this new tax collection agreement.

So while I'm on the topic of Bill 65, the mortgage brokers act, I do want to encourage the Ministry of Finance staff, who have worked very hard on this act, to promptly declare that the province of Ontario has no intention of clawing back the savings that will result from income splitting for pension income. In fact, I believe the Manitoba minister has already said, with some enthusiasm, that Manitoba will pass through those savings. So to the minister's obvious right-hand man, the éminence grise behind the finance minister, I will convey my strong urging—

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: Well, to whomever that definition fits on the opposite side, I say to my friend the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, please pass on the good word to allow those savings to be passed through for our retirees to benefit from income splitting of pension earnings.

I know my colleague Mr. Arthurs covered a lot of the aspects of Bill 65 in his discussion. He talked about some of the consultations that were behind it and the committee process. There were a number of amendments that the official opposition brought forward to Bill 65. I do want to say, happily, that one of the amendments brought forward by the official opposition did get accepted and is now part of the act. I thank Mr. Lofsky and Mr. Arthurs for working with the official opposition in making sure the language brought forward fit with the language of the bill in order to become a part of the act. I also want to thank Alan Silverstein, who was very helpful in offering advice on the topic of that amendment, which was combating mortgage fraud to ensure that mortgage brokers did not in any way engage in or allow any activities which could get you close to that line of mortgage fraud under this act. I'll get to the exact language momentarily.

While I'm on the topic, I do want to thank Mr. Silverstein for his advice on Bill 65. Of course, Alan Silverstein is well known to members of this committee. In fact, I know my colleague from Vaughan would know him because he lives in the Vaughan area, if I recall, in that riding. Mr. Silverstein is a well-known lawyer and, very importantly, a very well-known advocate on behalf of consumers. In fact, I referenced my time as consumer minister a little bit earlier in my remarks, and Mr. Silver-

stein was very helpful in my time as minister, somebody you could always depend on for prompt and solid advice on consumer protection issues. He has also been featured in the *Toronto Sun* on a number of occasions, highlighting the problems of mortgage fraud and the unfortunate lack of activity by the current provincial government to combat that.

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In return, my colleague from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, Mr. Tascona, has brought forward his own private member's bill with respect to mortgage fraud. I know that those who are interested in Bill 65 will also share great concern over mortgage fraud. I believe that bill is being debated this evening. I do hope that Minister Phillips will heed the advice from Mr. Tascona and incorporate some of Mr. Tascona's very important enhancements to consumer protection to fight mortgage fraud contained in his private member's bill. I think the province would be better off in many ways if that advice is taken by the minister and made part of his act, which I believe is Bill 152. I can get to that level of detail in a little bit, but while I was on the topic of Mr. Silverstein, I did want to mention his great assistance in Bill 65 as well as with respect to Bill 152.

There were some amendments that we brought forward as the official opposition that did not pass in committee. The first one I brought forward basically struck out subsections 6(7) and (8) of the bill. The reason we did this was that there was a very broad exemption in the bill which left it up to the government, to the Lieutenant Governor in Council, to define exemptions. There are, as there should be, strict rules around who can be involved in the business of mortgages: who administers mortgages, who would be involved in the sale, what kind of details it would have to convey, for example, to perspective lenders or borrowers.

Lawyers, as well, are a profession that gets some special treatment in this legislation because of that fine line between their work as lawyers, as those who are helping to administer the purchase of a home, for example, and at what point—the bill would try to address—they stop being lawyers and become mortgage brokers. Where would one draw that line and definitions of activities and clarity over the work of lawyers? So it is understandable that lawyers would have some degree of exemption under this act. The real estate brokers as well have been very active, and I congratulate Jim Flood for his advocacy on behalf of the real estate industry as to how they should fit into Bill 65.

The general concern that the official opposition had with subsections 6(7) and (8) of the bill was the broad exemptions. I think I used, just for effect, the notion that MPPs could be exempted from this bill. If MPPs so choose, they could go out and sell mortgages and get in that business. Obviously that would not be something any government would particularly consider unless the MPPs were well qualified. But certainly in the language of the bill, those types of exemptions would be allowed if you interpret that literally. Based on that concern, we sug-

gested that subsection 6(7) and (8) of the bill be struck out. Now, I know that in the mortgage brokers' regulatory package here before us, the government tries to, I guess, clarify qualifications for a licence and such. Hopefully I'll have a chance to get to that in the time available, which we'll keep an eye on, because we're very worried about this Mack truck exemption rule that exists under the bill in section 6.

Another aspect that had some considerable debate was a motion that I brought forward for subsection 7(1) of the bill, which basically said prohibition against multiple offices unless licensed. I believe this was brought forward, if memory serves, by Jeff Atlin, who was a director and chair of the government relations committee of the Independent Mortgage Brokers Association. I know that CIMBL, which was referenced earlier, had objected to this particular provision, feeling that the principal broker regulations imparted to the act would mollify concerns that the opposition would have about the arrangements between different brokerage offices. In that titanic battle between Murphy and Atlin, Murphy won out in round three or round four, I guess, of that struggle. Certainly CIMBL made a strong case, and I accept that that motion was defeated, and we'll look to the regulations to ensure that the goals of that motion are incorporated via reg. as opposed to an exact change in the bill. But I do thank those from the independent brokers' association for at least bringing forward a suggestion for debate at the committee.

Another important aspect that we brought forward for debate at committee dealt with standard examination. I thought CIMBL had some very strong ideas in this regard. I know it will be for future consideration, and I appreciate the responses from the parliamentary assistant when we queried him at committee about the government's plans.

My suggested amendment to subsection 14(1) of the bill basically said:

"Issuance of licence

"(1) The superintendent shall issue a licence to an applicant who,

"(a) satisfies the prescribed requirements for the licence; and

"(b) in the case of an applicant for a mortgage broker's or agent's licence, has successfully completed a prescribed examination."

We basically, if this had passed, had put right in the bill that there would be an examination—prescribed by regulations, of course. You need time to work out the details and to consult. Unfortunately, that was voted down. I know there is some discussion in the regulations package with respect to licensing in testing, and it is something we will continue to follow as this moves forward.

But I thought CIMBL's advice in this regard to have some sort of standardized education and standardized testing to ensure that those who engage in the business of mortgage brokering have the highest qualifications to reassure consumers that those individuals they're dealing

with, the men and women in the offices helping people as they purchase a home and purchase a mortgage to support that home, are of the utmost standard and qualification—I think that the vast majority are at that standard. It's always important to continue to raise standards.

There are, unfortunately, some examples we have seen in the newspapers of people who have been taken advantage of when it comes to mortgage fraud. I know that groups like CIMBL, the independent brokers and others engaged in Bill 65 want to combat, obviously, that type of fraud. That's why we appreciate some of their advice on strengthening Mr. Phillips's bill in addition to Bill 65.

You will recall, of course, that in addition to the prescribed exam, I did have a grandfathering provision for those who are already qualified as mortgage brokers. Similarly, there are grandfathering provisions that are part of the regulations that have been brought forward. I think that's sensible. When you're transitioning from one regime to another, I think it's important to always examine whether a grandfathering approach is relevant and useful, and I believe here that it is. So we're pleased to see in the regulations that the grandfathering notion is adopted in several of the regulations.

I know my colleague the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal is very concerned about section 27.1 of the bill.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I was just talking about it.

Mr. Hudak: He and my friend from Mississauga were just talking about section 27.1, and they'll remember the debate we had at committee because I had brought forward, you'll recall, the motion about duty of disclosure or other information. Just to summarize—it's a bit of a long amendment—basically we looked at what had been proposed by CIMBL, what has been used in other provinces, to say that if a mortgage broker or a brokerage is engaging with a borrower-lender, there's a duty to reveal the relationships that exist so that people can make their own decision based on the incentives that may spin out of that. People want to know, for example, what kinds of fees are changing hands, what kind of information is changing hands. Our view, as you can see through the amendment proposed, was that we would put that in legislation. The government's response was, "While we appreciate it"—the government seemed to appreciate the amendment; they just didn't agree that it should be in legislation. They thought it would be best in regulation.

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I do note that in the package of regulations, they do talk about representations to the public, beginning on page 36, and then disclosure at part V, beginning on page 42. So while I had hoped that it would be part of the bill itself, I do understand that, from time to time, there is a view that this level of detail should be in the regulations, and that's what the government chose to do with respect to section 27 of the bill. I'll look forward to advice from those who are concerned about this as well as my

colleagues from Don Valley East and Mississauga West on section 27.

To summarize: As I said, the nature of the relationship between the brokerage or broker and the borrower and lender should be made public, should be disclosed: a description of the products that the brokerage or broker offers; a description of fees, commissions or any other kind of compensation, including compensation based on volume of the business, or other factors or gifts, such as a payment for travel expenses and attendance at seminars etc. If I were a consumer dealing with a mortgage broker and that mortgage broker was advising me to deal with company X as opposed to lender Y, I think it would be important for me to know if company X had a special relationship with that mortgage broker; for example, if that mortgage broker had taken a trip to Las Vegas for a seminar. Those types of things should be revealed for perfect clarity when engaging in this substantial relationship.

I think we all know that for the vast majority of Ontario residents and those watching and listening today, a purchase of a home is probably the largest purchase they'll make in their lifetime, and a mortgage is the greatest debt they will take on in a lifetime. When making that kind of very important decision as an individual, as a couple or as a family, knowing the relationship a mortgage broker has with the various companies—his or her incentives—and lending firms is important. Therefore, I had hoped that amendment would go through as part of the bill. But I was pleased to see a lot of similar concepts in the proposed regulations that are before us today.

I had also offered a slightly different approach to duty of disclosure in one of my other amendments which wasn't as prescriptive. It left aspects to regulation. Again, it unfortunately did not pass, but I do see that, in many senses, its spirit lived on. Can I at least say that? The spirit of my amendment passed. Amen.

This was the one I originally crafted that passed. We changed the language somewhat. We're always pleased to see it when this happens—that an opposition amendment becomes part of the bill. My original amendment was to subsection 44(1) of the bill, which is a prohibition on false or deceptive information. It read as follows:

No licensee "shall give, assist in giving or induce or counsel another person ... to give or assist in giving any false or deceptive information or document when ... dealing in mortgages ... trading in mortgages ... carrying on business as a mortgage lender ... or administering mortgages."

Again, I want to thank Mr. Silverstein for his advice on that and the companion motion that amended paragraph 9 of 47(1) and subsection 44(1), which prohibit false or deceptive information. We did work with Mr. Lofsky and Mr. Arthurs, ensuring that the bill would be amended in that way. We're always appreciative of that. I don't need to dwell on it much more, because I am going to get to the changing of the title of the act later, which I still hope—can we amend it in third reading? Mr.

Speaker, can we amend the bill in third reading if we have all-party support?

The Deputy Speaker: It's my understanding that you can do almost anything if you have unanimous consent, but there are some things that you can't do, and the Clerk's going to help me on that one right now.

You have to refer it back to the committee. I knew that, but I just left that out.

Mr. Hudak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that.

So we have the opportunity to refer this bill back to the finance committee. Mr. Hoy from the Chatham-Kent area is Chair, as a matter of fact. It would be a simple amendment.

All right, I'll skip right to it. I will end the drama and the suspense right now and I'll move immediately to this particular amendment, because I know my colleague the Minister for Public Infrastructure Renewal will be very interested in this one, section 66 of the bill, which is the short title. In committee I moved that section 66 of the bill be struck out and the following substituted:

"Short title

"66. The short title of this act is the Arthur Lofsky Act...."

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I like it.

Mr. Hudak: See? I thought the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal would like it.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: That's my constituent.

Mr. Hudak: Oh, yes. Mr. Lofsky's father lives in the riding of Don Valley East.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Do you want the address?

Mr. Hudak: We don't need the address for Hansard, but maybe Mr. Lofsky senior—

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Doctor.

Mr. Hudak:—Dr. Lofsky will lobby his member, the member for Don Valley East and the Minister for Public Infrastructure Renewal, to support my amendment. Of course, thanks to the advice of the Speaker, we'd have to take that back to committee to make that change, but I'm just sensing that kind of tripartisanship here this evening in favour of Mr. Lofsky.

We did move this forward a bit tongue-in-cheek, but I do want to commend Mr. Lofsky and his colleague, Sarah Hanafy, for their work on this bill and working with the opposition. I've never quite figured out who is the superior in the offices—Ms. Hanafy, I'm getting the signal. So Mr. Lofsky reports to Ms. Hanafy. That's probably why this was killed. Sarah Hanafy brought the hammer down and she said that we can't do the Lofsky act. I understand. So maybe at committee I'll move forward an amendment that would call it the Sarah Hanafy and Arthur Lofsky Act in return.

I seek all-party support, unanimous consent, to send this bill back to committee to change the title of the act to the Sarah Hanafy and Arthur Lofsky Act. Do I have unanimous consent?

The Deputy Speaker: Even before I got up I heard a no to your request.

Mr. Hudak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always worth trying. One of my colleagues opposite said, "Just call it Sarah." The relevance of the individuals you know by one name, like Lincoln and Kennedy and of course John F., not—

Hon. Mr. Caplan: The other Kennedy.

Mr. Hudak: Maybe you thought that way; I thought John F.; although Mr. Kennedy coming out against the motion to recognize Quebec as a nation I thought was an interesting move in the leadership politics.

We tried. I say to my friends Ms. Hanafy, Mr. Lofsky: We did our best to send it back to committee. I know you're looking forward to more committee time with me on a finance bill, maybe in the new year. Nonetheless, I did bring that motion forward to amend section 66 of the act, which was the short title of the act. Mr. Prue and I thought for a while that we had Mr. Arthurs on side, but then the heavy hand of Sarah Hanafy came down.

I will move on to a couple of other topics with respect to Bill 65. As I said, we have now for public perusal the consultation drafts of regulations, which, for those listening at home who feel so compelled, can be downloaded from the Ministry of Finance's site. They are invited to send their feelings by January 19, 2007, in about seven weeks' time or so, to the Minister of Finance.

I would encourage them, too, to send them to the opposition critics—to me, the member for Erie-Lincoln, and Mr. Prue, Beaches-East York—because we would enjoy having their input on this bill. Of course, my e-mail is tim.hudak@pc.ola.org. Simple referrals, I think, will cause some ongoing debate through the regulatory process, through the consultations.

There is no doubt: It's challenging to get the language right around this. There are people on both sides of the issue. I refer you to page 11 of your copy of the regulations for Bill 65—at least, it comes up as page 11 in my copy—simply titled "Exemptions from the Requirements to Be Licensed" and then "Simple Referrals."

1700

When it comes to referring borrowers to lenders, this regulation, if it was adopted by cabinet, would say, "A person or entity that refers a prospective borrower to a prospective mortgage lender is exempted from the requirement in section 2 of the act to have a brokerage licence or a mortgage broker's or agent's licence if the person or entity complies with both of the following requirements:

"1. Before or at the time of making the referral, the person or entity advises the prospective borrower in writing,

"i. that the person or entity has received or will or may receive a fee or other remuneration, whether directly or indirectly, for making the referral, and

"ii. of the nature of the relationship between the person or entity and the prospective lender.

"2. The only other information that the person or entity gives to the prospective borrower is the name, address, telephone number, fax number, e-mail address

or website address of the prospective lender or of a person who acts on behalf of the prospective lender.”

I think you understand the importance of the language around simple referrals, because basically there is a broad-based exemption for individuals who engage in simple referrals, subject to the circumstances described in regulation. So here we have the ministry's draft of regulations when it comes to prospective borrowers to lenders under the “Simple Referrals” definition. I think it is important that they note, for example, that a fee will be received. I don't think it says, though, the level of the fee. It just says that a fee will be received, as opposed to the exact amount of the fee that is received. I look forward to advice on that. The level of the fee I think will be important to many people. We certainly heard at committee that some were concerned that substantial fees were being given for simple exchanges of information and therefore maybe some other work was being done in return for that substantial fee, so perhaps that's something the ministry will consider, as to the value of the fees. I believe Mr. Prue and I had brought forward some advice around publication of fees or disclosure of fees during our committee hearings.

“Referring lenders to borrowers,” which will probably be the usual circumstance for consideration as well: Again, the fees or other remuneration will have to be disclosed and, importantly as well, consent in writing to give the prospective lender “the name, address, telephone number, fax number, e-mail address or website address,” as specified by the prospective borrower.

Lastly, as part of this, “Referral for no fee or other remuneration”: If a simple exchange of information took place without a fee being charged, the exemption would likewise be granted. So again, nothing in these two sections above affects the rights of a person who doesn't have a brokerage licence or mortgage broker's or agent's licence to refer those individuals I discussed, those two-way transactions, for no fee or other remuneration.

I know those who are reading along in their regulations packages will see that we then get to the section on lawyers and the governing of activities surrounding lawyers in their work when it comes to mortgages. I believe that the Ministry of Finance staff are probably very careful in their language. The Ontario Bar Association, among others, had highlighted the importance of getting the language right when it comes to the work of lawyers in administering mortgages, trading in mortgages and dealing in the mortgage industry. I look forward to their advice on that section of the draft regulations.

In the interests of time, despite the obvious excitement from my colleagues across the way, I will leave out the other exemptions that come under this part of the act, the simple referrals, and go directly to the issue I had referenced before, the education standards that would come into effect if these regulations as they stand are adopted. I'll note that under the section “Eligibility to Be Issued a Mortgage Broker's Licence” there is a reference to, “The individual has successfully completed a program of education for mortgage agents approved by the super-

intendent for the purpose of paragraph 5 of subsection 10(1)” in the act. Similarly, “The individual has successfully completed, within three years before applying for the licence, a program of education for mortgage brokers approved by the superintendent.”

This is followed by grandfathering exemptions for education and experience. I'll refer individuals to what's called page 21 on my copy to see if they have the balance right when somebody could be licensed based on their experience and how recently they have engaged in this business.

I do hope that some of my suggestions, as well as those that came forward from CIMBL, become part of the regulations either in this package or, if there's a revisit of these issues down the road, around the testing requirements. Hopefully our advice is followed as part of that.

I had mentioned another one of my proposed amendments to the bill that did not get adopted. The parliamentary assistant indicated that this would be followed up in regulations, and that's governing different brokerages that are in a business relationship. The government said they would address that through the principal broker regulations in the bill. This would put particular responsibilities on the principal broker to make sure that high standards are applied through all the brokerages that fall under that principal broker, and we hope that there will be some satisfaction. Again, I look forward to advice on this set of regulatory proposals to see if it matches the standard we had brought forward in amendments from the official opposition.

I want to emphasize again that I think Ontario can have the highest of standards by ensuring that items like presentations to the public and disclosures to prospective clients are consonant, to ensure that individuals understand the relationship between a mortgage broker, a lender and a borrower. I had mentioned some of the things I had brought forward, specifically one of our amendments. Again, the parliamentary assistant had indicated that they would instead do so through regulation. Indeed, in the regulatory package, a number of items to talk about: the duty of disclosure to borrowers and lenders that have a similar—actually, they have significant detail here and, I think, a similar principle that I had brought forward in an amendment on behalf of the official opposition.

In the interest of time—I know that my colleagues from the third party are looking forward to once again engaging in discussion on Bill 65. Again, while I do have finance staff here, on Bill 151 we had brought forward amendments in the same spirit that we had brought forward amendments on Bill 65. Unfortunately, due to a very tight motion in the House, debate was severely restricted at committee. Bill 151, the way it was handled, was probably opposite to the open relationship between the government and the opposition parties on Bill 65. We had hoped that that same spirit would carry on, and it was with regret that I saw a couple of amendments we had proposed that did not even have a chance to be debated at committee.

My colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka is here. Bill 151, as you know, is reworking the Provincial Land Tax Act so that the Minister of Finance would basically act as the mayor and council and could set tax rates in unorganized areas in northern Ontario, as a municipal council would. My colleague Mr. Miller and my colleague Mr. Ouellette, who is the northern development and mines critic, are both here tonight, both giving me solid advice on this, because if the taxes are going to go up on properties in unorganized territories, it seems very reasonable that that money would go back in services for taxpayers in that area. The fear that my colleagues had, that they asked me to bring forward at committee, was that the bill would allow the Minister of Finance basically to collect the funds here to Queen's Park, and Lord knows how he would spend them. There are no restrictions on dropping the "G" from OLGC, for example. We're running out of letters there, but he may choose to drop another letter from OLGC.

I had hoped that those amendments had gone through in the spirit that those had gone through on Bill 65; unfortunately, they did not. Hopefully I'll have a chance to talk about Bill 151 down the road. But given the happy coincidence that my colleague from Oshawa and my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka are here this evening, I did want to again re-emphasize the importance that if the government does go ahead with the provincial land tax reform and is increasing taxes on residents in unorganized territories, at the very least the government should guarantee that the money goes back to support services in those areas.

Again, I appreciate the opportunity to debate today on Bill 65. Again, the official opposition are supportive of this legislation, and we appreciate the hard work of the minister, his PA and his hard-working staff in bringing this bill forward. We look forward to the discussion on the regulations in the time ahead.

1710

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): It's my pleasure to speak on Bill 65. Certainly, I give thanks to the member from Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge and the member from Erie–Lincoln, who have shared their thoughts.

I know that the members opposite are waiting with bated breath to hear what the New Democrats are planning on doing about this legislation. Just so that they can relax, I should say that we, of course, are planning on supporting this legislation. However—and there's always a "however"—there are some concerns. I want to use some of my time in going over some of those concerns and hope that when this and if this goes back to committee—we hope it does—those concerns can be addressed in the body of the bill and not later on.

The government has said, and the member from Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge has said as well, that the government in enacting and hoping to enact this bill is hoping to do three things: (1) to protect consumers, (2) to bring better regularization and (3) to provide better competition within the process. It's exactly within those

three mandates that we have some concerns partly about what's not in this bill.

I want to say, before I go any further, that we're certainly appreciative of the work of mortgage brokers and lending agencies in this province. My husband and I are just in the process of buying a house. We're going through a mortgage broker, not through a bank. We've had excellent service, and we're pleased that that option exists for us. Like many other Ontarians, I know that it's not only the service but it's also the interest rate that draws us there. As has been noted, there has been a huge shift in the way that Ontarians look for mortgages and negotiate mortgages over the last 30 years since this act has been brought back. Now 26% of all Ontario homebuyers are going through a mortgage broker. Apparently, 10 years ago that was maybe one in 10 to one in 15. So certainly the field has shifted dramatically.

I know also that this bill has significant support. It has support, as you've heard, from the Canadian Institute of Mortgage Brokers and Lenders, the Independent Mortgage Brokers Association, the Ontario Real Estate Association, the Law Society of Upper Canada, the Ontario Bar Association and the Canadian Bankers Association. So I want to thank those bodies as well.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: And now the New Democrats.

Ms. DiNovo: And now the New Democrats, as the member opposite has so accurately pointed out.

For those who are watching at home and perhaps wonder what this actually does, I want to go through a little bit of the history of this bill so it brings everyone up to speed. What is in the act? The Mortgage Brokerages, Lenders and Administrators Act, 2006, basically updates the Mortgage Brokers Act, the act that currently regulates mortgage brokers. That's what we've been discussing this evening. Under the old act, persons who carry on the business of lending money on the security of real estate are required to be registered with the superintendent of financial services. Certain financial institutions and employees acting on behalf of an employer are not required to be registered under the act because they are considered to be adequately regulated elsewhere; I'm going to speak about this in a minute. Individuals authorized to deal in mortgages on behalf of a mortgage broker, commonly called mortgage agents, are not required to be registered under the old act. Real estate brokers are deemed to be registered under the old act.

Under the new act, the following activities are regulated: (1) dealing in mortgages in Ontario; (2) trading in mortgages in Ontario; (3) carrying on business as a mortgage lender in Ontario; and (4) carrying on the business of administering mortgages in Ontario.

The new act also provides for four types of licences to be issued by the superintendent of financial services: a brokerage licence, a mortgage broker's licence, a mortgage agent's licence and a mortgage administrator's licence.

Corporations, partnerships, sole proprietorships and prescribed entities that carry on the business of dealing in mortgages, trading in mortgages or lending money on the

security of real property are required to have a brokerage licence. Corporations, partnerships, sole proprietorships and prescribed entities that carry on the business of administering mortgages in Ontario are required to have a mortgage administrator's licence. And individuals who deal in mortgages or trade in mortgages are required to have a mortgage broker's or mortgage agent's licence.

The new act does not deem real estate brokers to be licensed. Also, under the new act financial institution and their employees are exempted from the requirement to be licensed. This includes employees of financial institutions who do not work out of the offices of their employer. Individuals and institutions that provide simple referrals are exempted from the requirement to be licensed if they provide specified information to the prospective lender and prospective borrower and comply with additional requirements that may be prescribed by regulations. Lawyers also appear to be exempted from the requirement to be licensed.

The old Mortgage Brokers Act imposed—and I haven't heard this discussed this evening—foreign ownership restrictions on mortgage brokers. That act also requires a prospectus to be filed with the superintendent in respect of mortgage transactions involving land outside of Ontario. The new act does not include these sorts of restrictions.

We've heard it said that this process has been transparent. Certainly, a great deal of work has gone into this bill and on the committee dealing with this bill—so much work, in fact, as you've heard my colleague from Erie-Lincoln discuss it, that it's been almost a year to get to this point. You also heard him express a concern that we wish that the same transparency accompanied the discussion of Bill 151, instead of closure. So it's taken almost a year to get to this point. A great deal of input has already gone into it, and yet there are still some issues—issues that truly need to be dealt with, in the upcoming months, we hope.

This legislation, as it stands, does not determine the regulations. Certainly the minister of the day or the superintendent could vary those regulations dramatically. So of course we're looking forward to seeing what those regulations will look like. I draw the attention of the Speaker and others in the House to Bill 94, which sought to deal with regulating accountants. It was legislation similar to this bill, and yet now we have, when we look at the situation with accountants, a great deal of strife, a great deal of concern. Looking back, was it really a waste of time or not that the legislation dealt with Bill 94 in that way? We'd like to see that what happened with Bill 94 does not happen with Bill 65. And what that requires is that more detail be built right into the bill rather than as an adjunct. We hope that happens.

We note with some concern that there's not a penny for consumer education and protection allocated in this bill, and, in that sense, consumer redress. Although of course the bill does what it should do in some respects, which is to update the act from 30 years ago, we're concerned that it still doesn't go quite far enough for con-

sumers. When a consumer finds a problem with their mortgage broker or lender, where do they go? What happens? What is the process there? I notice that the Ombudsman is not discussed or noted here. We would like to see some discussion of the Ombudsman's role where Bill 65 is concerned.

1720

We also see that in this bill there are these exemptions. They're the exemptions presumably because of their own regulatory bodies. I gather the government hopes that their own regulatory bodies will take over in terms of regulating these other professions. Still, the exemption of them is worrisome and concerning, especially where educational bottom lines are concerned. If not those exemptions removed or those bodies included in this bill, we would certainly like to see where, in their own regulations, education comes into play. Again, this is for consumer protection. There, we see lawyers are exempt and employees of financial institutions are exempt. Even those you heard who are off-site and those who make referrals are also exempt from the body of this bill. If they are exempt, then we would like to know why, in particular, and what is it in their own regulations that covers the concerns that a consumer might have about education? We'd also like to see, in those who make referrals, what kind of education we're requiring of them, or are we requiring anything of them? Again, it doesn't go into specifics here.

I was pleased, by the way, to see that section 37 of this bill was struck out upon further reading in committee, I gather. This is section 37(1). It also bothered some of the stakeholders I spoke to. The Ontario securities council has the same powers to appoint a receiver in the investment business. That has been problematic, so I was happy to see that go. Looking at this bill through the eyes of a consumer, where they find redress, where they find an appeal process, what happens to them when something does go wrong?

Foreign ownership: I haven't heard a lot of discussion about foreign ownership here tonight. I wonder if this is something that should be looked at in committee in great detail. I wonder if this is a concern to anybody else who happens to be watching or listening about Bill 65.

I grew up in an era where there was Canadian nationalism. We were concerned about who owned the province of Ontario, who actually owned the land of the province of Ontario. Do we feel comfortable with a lack of regulations around this? Do we feel comfortable with the possibility that foreign ownership could own half or more of Ontario? I don't know. Again, it's not in this bill. One would want to see in the regulations, hopefully, something, at least a discussion around why all of a sudden it's left out, why we're not concerned about who owns land and who doesn't own land and whether it's important that Canadians own Canadian land or not. Hopefully, when this goes back to committee—we hope it does—that serious discussion of foreign ownership of our land will come into play there as well.

One of the things that I like to do when I look at a bill that is from a field that I'm not in is to discuss it with

stakeholders. Interestingly enough, a couple of the stakeholders whom I discussed it with have the same cautionary note. Again, I don't see this cautionary note in here, because there's not a lot in here in terms of the regulations, cautions or exemptions, and why. One would hope that this be brought forward in committee and dealt with in some detail.

One of the cautionary notes that came from both brokers and financial planners was about insurance. It was about errors and omissions insurance and fraud insurance and why there are no provisions in this bill for brokers and their agents to carry fraud insurance or errors and omissions insurance. This is looking at this bill from a consumer's point of view and also from a mortgage broker's point of view. One would hope that there would be in this bill some attempt to deal with that. Other regulatory bodies and other regulated bodies have to carry insurance, both errors and omissions, and fraud. Of course, we would like to see something around that as well.

One of the stakeholders whom I consulted was also concerned that there didn't seem to be anything in this bill making it mandatory for mortgage brokers to belong to provincial and national associations—that would seem to be a reasonable chain of command in terms of regulations—and that perhaps there should be some accountability of those provincial and national associations, not only of the mortgage brokers themselves—perhaps there should be some accountability of those associations, not only of the mortgage brokers.

So again, another concern. I didn't see it in the bill. I would hope that that concern is brought up at committee and would hope that the honourable members who have put in a great deal of time would put in just that little bit of extra time to make sure that these loose ends are tied up for the protection of the consumer.

As well, I noted the fines that were laid out in the bill. They ranged from \$10,000 in some instances up to \$200,000. Again, a question: We know that there are lending institutions and mortgage brokers of various sizes here. Perhaps these fines are onerous for someone who's small. Perhaps these fines are not large enough for somebody who represents a very large holding or a very large corporation. We would want to look maybe at some of the rationale behind the size of the penalties because we all know that, unless something can be enforced, it need not even be enacted. So enforcement is the question: How does one enforce what this bill attempts to enforce?

It gives the superintendent some considerable powers—police powers almost—to go into brokerages and look through records, etc. But what happens then? How does one enforce this bill, these regulations, on the very brokers and brokerage agents that this bill concerns?

Those are some of the concerns that we have as New Democrats. We have concerns about really the teeth of this bill: the financing, the matter of appeal. How does that happen? We have concerns about the lifting of the foreign ownership restrictions. That's a broad discussion.

It's a discussion that needs to happen and here's a good opportunity for that to happen. How do we feel about the very land that we stand on here in Ontario being foreign-owned, the majority of it? There's nothing in this bill as it stands now to prevent it, whereas in the old mortgage act there was.

Does the old mortgage act need updating? Of course it does; it's 30 years old. We bow to all of this incredible wisdom that's represented by the stakeholders here. But there are cautionary notes, and these notes are more than cautionary in the sense that they present a kind of slippery slope. We want the committee to really look at these: the insurance issue, the foreign holdings issue, the education issue, the enforcement issue and the lack of any money at all towards consumer education, which is paramount here, and for consumer redress.

There are larger issues, of course, as well for New Democrats than Bill 65 and what we'd like to see. Instead of debating Bill 65, we would like to have the chance to debate something coming from the other side of the floor about property tax. This government has refused to even look at the issue of property tax until after the next election. We think that's a particularly callous move. I know in my riding we have seniors in danger of losing their houses right now because of MPAC assessments. We'd like to see some movement on that now.

We know that our Ombudsman, in his wisdom—and it is wisdom—has made 22 recommendations around how MPAC could be reformed and informed, and this government has done nothing to move on those recommendations until after the next election. I know that my colleague Mr. Prue has not only done excellent work on Bill 65; he has also released a fact-finding mission's conclusions. It's called Ouch Assessment, and anyone listening and watching could find this at www.ouchassessments.ca. You'll find there some concrete proposals for how we could make MPAC better, how we could address the issues of property tax which we haven't yet addressed. We would like to have a chance to debate that.

We'd like to have a chance to debate housing in its broader sense as well. I have a question to Mr. Gerretsen, the minister in charge of housing, as to how many units this government has provided in that \$300- to \$400-a-month range. Why \$300 to \$400 a month? Because this is the amount of money that anybody earning minimum wage as it now stands, anybody on Ontario Works or ODSP, can afford. So we can't really talk about units of affordable housing unless we can talk about how many units this government has provided at that. I've yet to get an answer to that question. I suspect that the answer is in the single digits. That's frightening. It's appalling because this government promised to provide 20,000 units of affordable housing. So again, we as New Democrats would like to have that discussion in the House.

1730

To conclude, to go back to Bill 65, and I know my colleague Mr. Bisson is going to have a lot to say about it.

as well, those are our concerns. And they're not only our concerns; they're concerns of the stakeholders in the business whom I consulted. The concerns are about adequate insurance for brokers, both errors and omissions and fraud insurance. That's for the protection of them and also for the protection of the consumer. We're concerned about foreign ownership and the lack of discussion around the entire topic of foreign ownership in Ontario. We're concerned about the exemptions as well. Why are financial institutions and their employees exempt? Why are lawyers exempt? Perhaps there are good reasons, but we'd like to see those reasons enumerated, and we don't see that in this bill. If the exemptions have to do with their own regulatory bodies, then we'd like to see how they're governed by those regulatory bodies and what they're expected to do in terms of education and meeting certain bottom lines in the industry.

So with that, I'll conclude. Thank you for this chance to speak on Bill 65. As I say, certainly we'd like to see it move forward, but we'd like to see it move forward to committee where these myriad smaller points and not-so-small points can be dealt with in some detail.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins—James Bay): Thank you, Speaker. I didn't realize there was no more time in the other caucuses.

I want to take the opportunity to put on the record a number of comments in regard to this legislation, the first of which I want to say is that we as New Democrats support this particular bill. We think it's a step in the right direction. We do think there are some things that could be done to make the bill better, and unfortunately that didn't happen at committee. For whatever reason, the government decided in its majority to not agree to some of the amendments that were put forward. At times in this place, Mr. Speaker, as you know well, that could be the reason why the opposition would vote against a bill. But in this particular bill, we think there's enough sufficiently good in this bill to allow it to go forward in its present format. We're not going to oppose it, as you can see in this debate. We're allowing this debate to go forward in a fairly timely manner because we think it's important that there is regulation around this whole issue.

I want to put on the record a couple of things; first of all, one of the comments my colleague Madam DiNovo had made, which was the whole issue of consumer education. One of the things that we need to recognize is that at the end of the day, the people who are the utilizers of whatever service need to have more information dispensed to them so that they're able to make some informed decisions. Speaker, you know as well as I that people need to make decisions on very complex matters, and at times, if they don't have that information in front of them, sometimes they make some bad decisions. Speaker, certainly not you; certainly not me. Oh, then I would be lying, right? Because we've made bad decisions in the past too. I'm sure we can point to a few of them, and that is because at times we have not had the

information before us to be able to make those decisions in a way that would have been to our advantage.

One of the things that we think is important is that the government be engaged, along with the professions that are involved in this activity of mortgages, to have the onus of trying to inform the consumer of their rights and what they need to be looking for when it comes to whatever activity they're doing when it comes to the issue of a mortgage. We think that's somewhere we could have probably put a little bit of teeth around the legislation and, quite frankly, could have not been a cost to us. It's a cost that should be borne by the industry. But for whatever reason, the government decided not to go down that way. I wish they would have; they didn't. But like I say, at the end of the day it's not going to stop us from voting in favour of this legislation.

Another part of this act that I have some problem with because it's a bit of a philosophical one, or an ideological one, I guess would be a better way of putting it, is that financial institutions that are involved in this business will be exempted from having to qualify their staff to be regulated under this act. It's the big guys, right? We all know the banks: They're poor; they don't have any money. Everybody knows banks; if the banks make \$1 profit a year, they'd be really lucky. You know I'm being facetious, Speaker. The major banks in this country make literally billions of dollars of profit every year. You look at the statements in regard to financial earnings of banking institutions in Canada, they're among the richest of the corporations out there in Canada. It's not unknown to see a first quarter result of \$300 million or \$400 million in profit on the part of one bank, and we're afraid to say, "Go and qualify your staff so they are not exempt under the legislation dealing with mortgages"? I just have a bit of a hard time with that particular aspect. That's something I would have liked to see, that everybody be treated the same.

Why is it that we always pick on the little guy? It seems as if this government and previous governments, when they're doing legislation, tend to say, "Let's regulate the little guy and let's not take on the big guy." I think that's a problem, because a lot of us come from the small business sector. That's where I'm from. I quite frankly get kind of tired—and I'm a New Democrat saying this, so please understand what I'm saying—of government trying to regulate their way through things on the back of the smaller businesses and not making the larger corporations live up to the same standard. This is one of those examples in this legislation, where we're saying a small institution or a real estate agent or whatever is going to have to go through this process of having to qualify their people under the regulations, but they're not going to have to do that if they work at a bank.

I just think, that poor old bank, we know they didn't make any money last year. I guess McGuinty is saying to the banks, "We've got to give you guys a break because you're so poor. You didn't make any money last year so we'll give you another freebie." I'm quite tired of that. I

would like to see the big guys treated with the same kind of rules that we have to work with at the smaller end. My theory is this: The large banks and larger corporations have all kinds of money to help themselves and protect themselves. The people who need to be protected and helped are the people at the bottom end: the small business sector, the working class people, those people who work hard every day in their business or their job to make a living to support themselves and their families, and in the case of the small business, maybe a couple of other families. We need to do what we can to support the small business people and not put all the onus on them. We need to make sure that the big guys don't get yet another advantage.

That reminds me of a story. The federal and provincial governments at one point were looking at changing the way we deal with insurance sales. There was a proposition at one point that the banks would be able to sell car insurance and home insurance at the point of sale where you're getting your loan. I always thought, man, what an unfair advantage that would be for the large banks. Imagine, you walk up to the CIBC and say, "I want to borrow \$30,000 to buy a car. I've got 10,000 bucks and I'd like a \$30,000 loan to buy a car." And you sit down and the loans officer says, "Well, Mr. Wilkinson, come on in. Sit down in front of me. We've got a deal for you. As a matter of fact, we can include the insurance." Poor Mr. Wilkinson across the way is going to go, "Well, I don't want them to say no to my loan, so I'm going to agree to sign on the dotted line and get the insurance sale at the same time." I think you and I would agree, that's a really unfair advantage against those small brokers who are trying to make a living selling insurance.

If that proposal had been accepted at the federal level with the banks and at the provincial level with the credit unions and the caisses populaires, we'd be in a situation where the big guys—you know, they're not big enough as it is? They don't have enough money coming in? They'd corner yet another market and all us little guys at the other end—I'm not an insurance broker, I want people to know; I'm an electrician by trade. I think insurance brokers—it's a business, it's a fair business, it's a legal business, and we shouldn't be giving that part of the business to another major corporation so in the end they can get even richer. How much money is enough for the big banks? They don't need our help. Those guys are doing quite okay without us. You figure out the money they're making on credit cards, on bank cards. The bank card issue is an interesting one because the banks won't even tell the committee in Ottawa that's responsible for banking how much money they make through fees, through bank machines. It's a machine to print money, literally.

And that's my point in this debate, in regard to this legislation. I don't think that large financial institutions should be exempted from any regulation that a small business has to go through as well. I think they need to be treated the same way. Those big guys have got enough things going their way. They don't need the provincial

government to help them out some more and then disadvantage an honest, hard-working small business person somewhere in northern or central or western Ontario. I don't think that would be the right thing to do.

I want to take this opportunity, because it is a finance bill, or a municipal bill as well, to deal with—actually, it's a finance bill, so it allows me to do a couple of things. I'm looking at you, Speaker, for a little bit of help here.

1740

The Deputy Speaker: It allows you to speak to Bill 65.

Mr. Bisson: No, but it's a finance bill, right?

The Deputy Speaker: You speak to Bill 65 and I'll sit here very quietly.

Mr. Bisson: You'll sit here very quietly. That's why we love you, Mr. Speaker: because you'll sit there very quietly and you'll accept this argument. That is, the whole issue around mortgages and the ability to buy property is also the ability to pay for and maintain that property once you own it. One of the things that we're seeing now is the whole issue of taxation on secondary residences or, as we would call them, cottages. There is a move afoot in the province of Ontario to say that all those cottages that are out in unorganized communities will be charged the same assessment as if they were living in a community. All I'm saying is that I won't be able to get a mortgage for a cottage or build one if I've got to pay the same taxes in an unorganized territory as you would in a municipality. So I argue the following: I really think that we need to make an amendment to the Assessment Act. That amendment seems to me a fairly simple one—and I know municipalities will get their feathers ruffled when it comes to this. Those people who own a house in a municipality—for example, you live in community X and you own a house, and you pay taxes on that house. You pay your education tax and you pay your municipal taxes on that house. Fine; not a problem, because you and your family get the service from the school board and the municipality, so you should pay those taxes. But I really think there needs to be a second level of assessment when it comes to your cottage. Why should you, in the same municipality, pay full taxes on your house and then go to your summer residence and pay full taxes on your cottage at the same rate? It just seems to me it's a grossly unfair issue, and as it relates to this act in regard to mortgages, you will not, as time goes on, be able to afford cottages—and I think they're a good thing for people to get for all kinds of reasons—on the present system of assessment.

I don't know about your riding, but I can tell you that in the riding I represent there are a lot of places in Hearst, in Opasatika, in Val Rita, in Moonbeam—my God, it's huge in Moonbeam—in Kapuskasing, Fauquier, Smooth Rock Falls, Timmins. A lot of people in those communities own cottages. For the most part, except for the city of Timmins, their cottages happen to be in unorganized communities. So somebody living in Kapuskasing pays their municipal taxes, and if they've got a cottage

out in Rufus Lake or Saganash Lake or wherever it might be, they're going to have to pay full tax as if they lived in Kapuskasing. There's no water, there's no sewer, there's not even a road. You have to basically fly in or take a bush trail to get to your cottage, and you're going to have to pay full municipal assessment. I think that's just wrong.

We need to recognize what it is. It's a seasonal home that people use for probably a total of about 60 days a year. Most places don't have hydro; they don't have the basic amenities; they haul their own water or they may have a pump that they power up with a generator. And we're going to say, "You pay taxes as if you're within the town of Kapuskasing or Opasatika or Hearst" or wherever it might be? I think that's grossly unfair. I think we need to make sure we have a taxation system that recognizes that the services you get should be a determinant for the taxes you pay. I think that's something that should be looked at in the confines of this legislation and others.

With regard to this act, the other part I want to talk about is those particular ones that are going to be licensed under the act. There are some really interesting articles that were written in regard to this particular issue. The problem is that you should always highlight all of the things you read so you know when you're in debate which part you want to refer to. Now I'm going to have to go by memory, because obviously I can't find very quickly the part that I wanted to refer to in this article. Anyway, my point was this: Under this act, we're going to be regulating the activities of certain people within this industry. I think that is an important thing to do, because we've all seen some really bad examples of how mortgages are dealt with.

I have to tell you this one story. People are not going to believe me, but this actually happened. A fellow came walking into my office about 10 years ago. I'm not going to give the name of the guy or the institution, because it wouldn't be fair. I don't have permission to do that, so we'll just call them both "X" and "X," all right?

So this guy comes walking into my office, and get a load of this. Pages, one day you're going to have to buy a house, and you've got to understand how this scam goes.

A guy walks into my office and says, "I went over to the bank in town"—I won't say where it was—"and I got a mortgage on my property to pay off the person that I bought the house from," because he bought the house and somebody else in the community had held a mortgage on it. So this particular individual had been paying for five or six years on the mortgage to an individual because it was a private sale. The reason he had done this was that he had gotten into financial troubles when he was single, he had gone bankrupt, and the banks would not touch him. So the only way he was able to get a mortgage was to go to an individual and have an individual hold the mortgage.

Now, as you know, there are people who are in the business of selling mortgages and holding mortgages, so this particular individual held the mortgage for this

particular guy to buy a house. The house, at the time, wasn't very expensive. It was an older home, and the mortgage on the house was about \$60,000.

The guy got a job. He worked in one of the local mills and he made some good money, and he was married and his wife worked. They had some kids, they had a decent family income, and then they started fixing up the family home. So he started doing work, replacing windows and plumbing, all the things you do in order to renovate houses.

To cut a very long story short, he goes to the guy he originally got the first mortgage from and he gets a second mortgage because he needs a little bit of money to finish what he started. He needed about another 10,000 bucks, because he had put about \$15,000 of his own money into it. He sort of ran up accounts at the building supply stores and he had to be able to pay off the building supply stores, so he went and got a second mortgage for an additional \$10,000. He continued to pay, and his mortgage rate was close to 20%.

He was sitting down one day at the mill and was talking to the guys around the lunch room table. Guys are talking about their mortgages, and this guy—I don't have another way to put it: He didn't know he could get a better deal. He just figured he was locked into this because he had gone bankrupt years before. He was paying the penalty, and he would have to continue paying an almost 20% mortgage.

Somebody said, "Hey, listen, Mr. X, you work hard, you've got a job, you've been full-time for five or six years and you've always paid your bills. Go to the bank. They'll lend you the money now. They can secure you because they know you have an income."

So Mr. X goes to Bank X and gets himself a mortgage. The bank says, "Not a problem. You can get a mortgage," and at that time they were at 4% or whatever it was. He signs the mortgage and basically starts making his payments at the bank. All right. End of story, you would think, right?

About a year later, the guy shows up at my office. They're going to repossess his house. I say, "What do you mean, they're going to repossess your house?" This is why we need this act, right?

Well, it turns out, when I started looking into it, that the guy had been paying the money to the bank but the bank had sent the cheque to pay the first and second mortgages to a lawyer. The lawyer in transition held the money inside an escrow account and had not paid off the guy who owned the mortgage. You know as well as I do that there could be a lot of money being made by certain people holding money in escrow accounts. For some reason, it was never being paid. Now, it turns out that this lawyer got in trouble, not just because of this, but he was involved in a whole bunch of other things and ended up getting in legal trouble. We'll just leave it that way.

But the point was, he was about to have his house repossessed. The sheriff's office had basically been given duly served papers from the courts on behalf of the person who held the first and second mortgage on the

original mortgage, and they were about to repossess the house.

Here's the worst part: The bank knew about it and did absolutely nothing. The bank, who gave the cheque for \$70,000 or \$60,000 or whatever it was—I forget the number—to the individual who held the money in escrow—and I'm trying to not divulge who all of these people are, because it's unfair because I don't have permission—did nothing. They knew that the house was about to be repossessed and they were doing absolutely nothing.

I say to the guy, "Come with me. We'll go to the bank together." So we jump in my truck, we drive up to this particular bank, and I say, "I want to see your loans officers in charge of this guy's mortgage."

The guy says to me, "Well, I think Mr. So-and-So's got a problem." I said, "No, buddy, Mr. So-and-So has no problem; I think you've got a problem. If you guys don't fix this problem real quick, I'll be out here with MCTV, Daily Press and anybody else I can get to talk about how incompetent you guys are at dealing with this particular guy's mortgage, because he's about to get his house repossessed as a result of an error that your bank has made."

It comes back to my point. What happened there is that the person who managed the account obviously wasn't as qualified as he needed to be, and we're going to exempt the banks from having to qualify their staff and we're not going to exempt mortgage brokers from having to qualify their staff? Where's the disconnect? So at the end of the day, we've fixed the problem for this individual constituent, but he's but one guy, one individual. How many other people get themselves in situations where they can be defrauded of their homes as a result of improper paperwork or, as I would say, incompetence on the part of the person who was dealing with that particular mortgage? That's why I wanted to say, in this debate, that we shouldn't have exempted the banking institutions from having their staff qualify. That example tells me that at times we need to make sure that the banks do a proper job.

What is worse about this particular case is that the bank wouldn't own up to its own mistake. They kept on

saying it was the individual's fault. I don't know what he did wrong. All he did was to make his mortgage payment every month as per the contract he signed, yet they were going to make him pay the price. They weren't interested in finding a solution. I just find that highly regrettable on the part of that banking institution and highly regrettable on the part of the people who were involved in that particular incompetence. I don't think it was a question that somebody knowingly defrauded by the bank. I think it was a question of incompetence on the part of the bank, and somebody knowingly trying to defraud in between, and the bank never caught on to it. I think that was a really sad thing.

Juste pour finir le débat sur ce point-là, comme parti néo-démocrate, on va supporter cette législation. On sait qu'il y a une couple de parties dans la législation qui auraient pu être améliorées, tel que j'ai proposé dans ce débat. Il faut s'assurer à la fin de la journée qu'on donne des protections aux consommateurs.

Les deux points que j'ai faits : on a besoin d'investir dans l'éducation des consommateurs pour s'assurer que ce monde-là est capable de prendre des décisions basées sur les informations qui font du bon sens. Ils comprennent bien leurs droits et ils comprennent comment le système marche. Deuxièmement, on a besoin d'être sûrs que tout le monde dans le système, y compris les banques, a la responsabilité de s'assurer que le « staff » dans leur système est qualifié pour pouvoir faire l'ouvrage qui est nécessaire dans ces institutions.

Je vous remercie, monsieur le Président. Vous avez été très patient. Comme d'habitude, c'était un plaisir. Je regarde encore pour avoir une autre belle opportunité ici à l'Assemblée législative de participer dans le débat avec tous les collègues qui ont écouté ce débat. Je suis sûr qu'ils vont prendre mes commentaires à cœur.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Arthur has moved third reading of Bill 65. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

This House is adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1753.

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No. 126B

N° 126B

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 27 November 2006

Lundi 27 novembre 2006

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 27 November 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 27 novembre 2006

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PUBLIC SERVICE OF ONTARIO STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT DES LOIS AYANT TRAIT À LA FONCTION PUBLIQUE DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 22, 2006, on the motion for second reading of Bill 158, An Act to revise legislation relating to the public service of Ontario by repealing the Public Service Act, enacting the Public Service of Ontario Act, 2006 and the Ontario Provincial Police Collective Bargaining Act, 2006 and making complementary amendments to various Acts and by amending various Acts in respect of the successor rights of certain public servants / *Projet de loi 158, Loi visant à réviser des lois ayant trait à la fonction publique de l'Ontario en abrogeant la Loi sur la fonction publique, en édictant la Loi de 2006 sur la fonction publique de l'Ontario et la Loi de 2006 sur la négociation collective relative à la Police provinciale de l'Ontario, en apportant des modifications complémentaires à diverses lois et en modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne la succession aux qualités pour certains fonctionnaires.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): I believe the rotation is now with the official opposition. The member for Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford.

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always a pleasure to debate in front of you, and tonight is no exception.

Bill 158 is a bill that is composed of a number of parts. I'm going to deal primarily with two parts. I want to start off by saying that the headquarters for the Ontario Provincial Police Association is in Barrie, Ontario, and we're very proud of that. Schedule B of Bill 158 deals with a new statute to deal with labour relations with the Ontario Provincial Police. Obviously, that's long overdue, a stand-alone piece of legislation to deal with that. Certainly, in principle, it's somewhat similar to the Police Services Act in terms of the exclusivity of the Ontario Provincial Police to govern its own operations, in particular subsection 2(3) in that regard. It's pretty straightforward, going through it in terms of what they're directing. As you know, the Ontario Provincial Police

Association can't strike, so you're dealing with very tightly knit legislation in terms of what their rights are, what the procedures are to deal with grievance dispute and also to deal with negotiations.

Certainly, I'm very supportive of fair labour relations with the Ontario Provincial Police and the Ontario Provincial Police Association. Not only do we need to ensure that we have the best policing possible to protect the public, but we also need to ensure that the men and women who are in the Ontario Provincial Police are treated fairly. It's very good to see that. Obviously, when we get to public hearings, we'll see if that, in fact, is the case in terms of whether we get submissions from the Ontario Provincial Police Association in terms of what is in here. But I would believe that the fact the Ontario Provincial Police Association president, who resides in my riding, was here the day the government announced the legislation is probably supportive, at least in principle, with respect to having stand-alone legislation with respect to the Ontario Provincial Police.

I'm going to deal quite extensively tonight with respect to the whistle-blower provisions in schedule A of the legislation. The reason I'm going to do that is because it's an important piece of legislation, and obviously it needs to be dealt with in a proper manner and in the context of whistle-blowing and how it came about.

The first piece of information I'm going to comment on is something I was reading on the weekend with respect to a speech that was made by a former Supreme Court justice, Frank Iacobucci—I'm going to get to that—with respect to his views in terms of why whistle-blowing came into effect and how he believes it is somewhat of a sad commentary on the state of the nation in terms of the legislative behaviour we have. That article, which I actually took out of the *Hill Times*, deals with—and I'll read it—"More Values and Better Leadership Needed for Accountability, Not More Rules."

"Legislating behaviour in the public service does not increase accountability and transparency, says an ex-Supreme Court justice; rather, more values need to be articulated and it starts with leaders.

"The fact that we are looking at whistle-blower legislation today is very unfortunate and reflects a breakdown in leadership as much as anything else," Frank Iacobucci said last Wednesday at the Public Policy Forum's inaugural Osbaldeston lecture focusing on public service renewal in the 21st century.

"Mr. Iacobucci said the sponsorship scandal was an isolated case and the response to it was over the top. 'It

tainted the reputation of the public service, but in no way drew its core values into question,' he said. 'Quite the contrary. This sad episode illustrated the anger which wells up in Canadians when public servants break from the core values [of excellence, impartiality, honesty, upholding the rule of law and public interest]. This happens from time to time, but when you think back over the last 50 years, not very often.'

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"There were rules in place that were broken, but the fact the scandal was uncovered is testament to the efficiency of those rules ... adding that the further response from the government was too much. 'More rules and more complex procedures' won't make the public service 'safer' from potential 'abuse' because it's all about believing in values and serving the public with them in mind.

"We need to hear it from the top that this is a public service where we do not turn our heads when we see questionable activities, that this is a public service where we speak truth to power, and that this is a public service where there are consequences for breaking with these value statements. This has to be understood from top to bottom and our actions must reflect these words rigorously and consistently across the system. That is the job of leaders."

Those are the comments that were given by a former Supreme Court jurist, Frank Iacobucci, who I think is very well respected throughout this country, with respect to his views on the legal system, but I think also dealing with public policy itself. So his view, capsulized, is that it's the fault of the leaders. Don't point your finger at the public servants, who are trying to do their job. And if there are breakdowns in the system, it's for the leadership of the country to make sure that there isn't a breakdown in the core values within not only our society but also the public service. That is one view, from a respected Supreme Court jurist who doesn't, frankly, support the principle of whistle-blower legislation.

On the opposite end of the spectrum we have such individuals as Allan Cutler, who is well renowned within this country with respect to dealing with whistle-blower legislation. I spoke with Mr. Cutler at some length. He provided me with some information on looking at the bill and his expertise in terms of whistle-blowing that I think the Speaker will find very enlightening in terms of looking at this bill from a perspective of the public servant. And the thesis of what Mr. Cutler is talking about is that when he looks at the legislation which is in Bill 158, he says, "Would I be protected as a whistle-blower?" I think that's the fundamental principle in terms of, "Would I, as a public servant, risk everything that I have"—not only their job but also their future—"to serve the public and make sure that something that is fundamentally wrong is reported and that I would be protected in doing that?"

Mr. Cutler analyzed the bill and he came to the conclusion that, "I read the sections as a whistle-blower and I keep asking myself two main questions: Is it clear?

Secondly, would I be protected as a whistle-blower?" His response is, "The answer to both questions is no. In particular, in the case of reprisals, it is completely unclear how reprisal can be dealt with in a clear, impartial and consistent manner. Reprisals take many forms." Mr. Cutler gives a number of examples here, and I think most people would be quite familiar with those in terms of dealing with employment situations: "Intimidation, blacklisting, forced transfer, manufacturing a poor record, complete paralysis of one's career, gagging the employees, only loyal employees have decision-making, pursue sham investigations, destroy the evidence, firing, threats, humiliation, denial of meaningful work, isolation, study issues to death, demotion, prevent written record.

"The decisions made in this regard are usually done behind closed doors and, with no paper trail, are difficult to prove. In fact, the employee doesn't often recognize ... these tactics until the damage is done. It is critical to have a body thoroughly understands these issues and their insidious nature.

"A whistle-blower is an individual has lost faith. He or she no longer trusts the organization to live up to its principles. As such, to force this individual to go back and follow the normal departmental rules will not work. They will perceive this as a stalling tactic and expect that justice will not be done. Whistle-blowers are an asset to an organization, not a liability. The decision on whether to expose wrongdoing is based on trust. The decision whether to give the employer the first chance before going public is based on trust. Trust is earned, and many public servants who witness wrongdoing will not report the situation unless they trust their management will do the right thing. Fundamentally, this is a management bill"—and we're talking about Bill 158—"designed to prevent problems, illegalities or unethical behaviour from becoming public knowledge. Secrecy breeds corruption.

"In summary, I would not recommend any public servant trust this legislation if they see wrongdoing or corruption."

That's from Allan Cutler. He comments on a number of areas which I agree with in terms of the difficulties with this bill, because the principle of this bill, when you really get into it, is to make sure whatever is under the carpet remains under the carpet.

"Now, look at section 1. The purposes of the act are all valid, but there are three points that are extremely important in framing the whistle-blowing issue. The first two points underscore the need for impartiality and ethical behaviour at all levels; however, they mention only the public service. Since they are mentioned in the act, it is equally, if not more, important to ensure that ministers and their staff also behave ethically."

So apart from the seven points that are in section 1 under the purposes of the act, he suggests adding another point, which would be number 8, which would be, "To ensure that ministers and parliamentary assistants and persons appointed to work in a minister's office are professional and ethical."

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Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that you agree with me on that particular point because, let's face it, that is part of the problem in terms of dealing with open and transparent government that any government faces, particularly this government, which is governing from the centre. If you govern from the centre, and that centre is not accountable to the public or any ministerial staff, then how are you ever going to get to the bottom of any particular issue? Ministerial staff and parliamentary staff should be given the same rights to become whistle-blowers if they feel that they should be. Partisan politics shouldn't play in protecting the public interest.

The other section I wanted to talk about—and there are many—is the reporting relationship as defined in part I. It is extremely important to note that this section has a major impact on the defined reporting relationship, since “deputy” and “minister” are defined for the cabinet office: “For the purposes of this act, the Cabinet Office is a ministry, the Premier is its minister and the secretary of the cabinet is its deputy minister.”

When you refer to part VI, the importance of this definition becomes clear. Part VI is the section dealing with disclosure and investigation of wrongdoing. Under clause 108(1)(a), “wrongdoing” refers to “a contravention by a public servant, a minister or parliamentary assistant.” Equally important is a contravention by a supplier or organization working with the government under a partnering arrangement. For example, management might know of a contravention by a company but refuse to take action. The manager would not necessarily be in contravention. So we need to expand our horizons in terms of dealing with people who do business with the government.

Clauses (b) and (c): Refusal to take action might not be considered an act or omission, or gross mismanagement. Certainly that should be included. An act or omission or gross mismanagement certainly should be something that's under the purview of the whistle-blowing legislation.

Also, under (b), “a grave danger to the life, health or safety of persons or to the environment” is not defined. A case could easily be made that most acts or omissions could not be considered “grave” since it is undefined. That would make the section meaningless. If there is a legal definition of “grave,” I'm not aware of it. “Grave” may mean life-threatening. That's a pretty high standard. Life-threatening, in the purest and most immediate sense, is different from what could pose a threat to the public in the future. So I don't think we need to be in a situation where a problem has arisen that we now are in a situation where it's life-threatening, whereas before it could have been prevented.

Under (d), “directing or counselling wrongdoing within the meaning of clauses (a) to (c)”: For this to be effective, you need clear definitions of (a) to (c). For example, would Hydro employees who are involved with nuclear reactors—which obviously would be a very serious situation if there was a problem in a nuclear

reactor—be covered under this act? It doesn't appear to be the case. Are crown corporation employees covered by this act? Just because the government decides that they don't want to directly hire people at Ontario Hydro doesn't mean that they're not under the auspices of the provincial government's authority.

The bill seems focused only on the provincial government employees, not all provincial levels of government. For example, why would it not also cover municipal employees? Municipalities are the creatures of the province. The province sets standards with respect to what municipalities have to do with respect to the environment, with respect to water, with respect to dealing with other situations like sewage—very important areas that have been made the responsibility of the municipalities. It should be broadened to make sure that if a provincial government official is aware that a municipality is doing something that is wrong and the municipal employees know they're doing something wrong—why shouldn't they have the right, especially when you're dealing with something as fundamental as water? Do we have to recall Walkerton? Is this government ignoring Walkerton with respect to situations that could have been whistle-blown, that should have been reported to protect the public? You cannot exempt municipal employees when you're dealing with such fundamental issues as water, sewage and landfill sites.

It's important that this government be realistic in terms of the real and true powers of what the provincial government covers. The provincial government covers their own directly hired employees and crown corporations, and they're responsible for municipal employees, especially where they put standards on employees in the municipal sector to do their job.

For the government not to do this would obviously suggest they either don't know what they are doing or they're deliberately making sure that this bill is as ineffective as possible, because it is as ineffective as possible. Quite frankly, it's a joke.

I want to deal with clause 112(b). During the investigation, everything should be private. However, this clause implies that the persons involved in disclosures have done something wrong since their names are not to be revealed. This should be the choice of the individual. Furthermore, the government should take pride in the employees who protect the government and represent the principles we value. As for witnesses, it should be their choice.

I would further ask why the government would want to protect persons responsible, unless it is anticipated that they would be senior and close advisers to the party in power. That goes without saying in terms of the cover-up and the lack of transparency that has been evident throughout this government's tenure.

Section 113, “Restrictions on disclosure”: Clauses 2(a) to 2(c) should read, “Nothing in this part prohibits a public servant or former public servant to make a disclosure.” If the executive council is doing nothing unethical, there is nothing to fear. When I say “executive

council,” I’m talking about the Premier and his cabinet. If the Premier and his cabinet have done nothing unethical, there’s nothing to fear. The only possible reason to prevent or not authorize a public servant from making a disclosure to the Integrity Commissioner is that the Premier and the cabinet have something unethical or illegal to hide. The Integrity Commissioner is an officer of this Legislature and should be able to hear all the evidence of unethical or illegal activity.

That’s a big point, Mr. Speaker, and I want you to reflect on it. Under section 23 of the Members’ Integrity Act, the Integrity Commissioner is made an officer of this Legislature. This bill purports to put the Integrity Commissioner into a direct reporting function with the deputy minister. There’s something wrong with that. That Integrity Commissioner is an officer of the Legislature and is supposed to report to this Legislature.

Subsections 115(1) and 115(2): Neither the Public Service Commission nor Management Board of Cabinet should be able to establish procedures to deal with disclosures of wrongdoing. That’s what this bill gives them. Establishing procedures is an excellent means to make a well-intentioned law useless, as the procedures can be extremely onerous. These procedures aren’t even defined in this bill. It’s typical of the style of the Minister of Government Services. He doesn’t like to put everything in the bill. He likes to keep it in the regulations because he likes to have that flexibility.

That’s fine, but when you’re dealing with whistle-blowing legislation, which is supposed to be transparent, and they are portraying to the public that they’re going to make sure that whistle-blowing is there to make sure that someone who’s a whistle-blower will want to come forward, those procedures should not be kept from the public for their own scrutiny to make sure they are in fact transparent and workable and do protect the whistle-blower. The government is not doing that.

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Clause 115(3)(a): This is completely unacceptable. Potentially the whistle-blower can be directed by a procedure to report to the person who is causing the problem. This is an excellent tactic to give power to management and to muzzle and control information on wrongdoing. That’s a problem. What are we doing here? Is this another smoke-and-mirrors exercise? The whistle-blower has to report to the person he’s supposed to report on? Do you expect that anything is going to be done? I hardly think anyone is ever going to whistle-blow in that situation.

Clause 116(a): As I read it, the public servant must have reason to believe that it would not be appropriate to disclose the wrongdoing. That means the public servant must justify his or her decision. This clause should simply read, “The public servant or former public servant can choose to disclose the wrongdoing to the Integrity Commissioner.”

Section 117: There are weaknesses in the decision process, and it is very open to abuse. Per paragraph 1, it would be easy to establish a procedure or policy and then

state correctly that the matter is outside of the Integrity Commissioner’s authority. The paragraph should allow for judgment by the Integrity Commissioner. In other words, give the Integrity Commissioner some discretion. Change the wording in the opening paragraph from “shall” to “may”: “Where the Integrity Commissioner receives a disclosure of wrongdoing under section 116, the commissioner may refuse to deal with the disclosure if one or more of the following circumstances apply....”

The government, in its wisdom, is looking at tying the hands of the Integrity Commissioner by making it mandatory for him not to deal with something if it falls in with one of those grounds. That is wrong. The Integrity Commissioner is an officer of this Legislature. It’s the Integrity Commissioner’s discretion to decide what he or she feels is the direction to go to protect the public interest. We’re not talking about small issues here. We could be talking about pollutants going into a river, pollutants going into a stream, tampering with water, E. coli in water. Why are we setting up a procedure where that could be hidden from the public?

Paragraphs 6 and 7 of section 117: Without an investigation, it would be impossible to know if “the disclosure is not sufficiently important” etc. or if too much delay has resulted. Furthermore, the repercussions of whistle-blowing make it highly improbable that the complaint would be made without good cause. I agree with that. Why would anyone put themselves on the line, for their future and their job, if they weren’t doing it with good reason? I believe that is another element of this bill that the government is looking—because there are all kinds of exemptions to make sure that the Integrity Commissioner can’t deal with whistle-blowing. That particular provision is wrong.

Paragraph 8 of section 117: Many public policy decisions have consequences. Again, the Integrity Commissioner should be allowed to determine this, not just be told that there is no jurisdiction. It can easily be argued that most problems are linked to or are the result of public policy decisions. Therefore, this would have the effect of reducing the bill’s effectiveness.

The next section deals with a referral by the Integrity Commissioner, subsection 118(3). The Integrity Commissioner should be given the independence and staff to investigate. This is a real problem in this bill because right now we have an Integrity Commissioner, and the Integrity Commissioner has two full-time staff. The government is saying, “We want you to be the whistle-blower referee, Mr. Integrity Commissioner.” With three staff and in excess of 100,000 public servants, does that make sense to you, Mr. Speaker? Obviously, they’re not taking this seriously. You cannot have, as contemplated in the act, in section 3, a civil service investigating itself. To give it to a deputy minister etc. is asking them to investigate themselves. That is what the bill provides. If the Integrity Commissioner decides that there’s a basis for a whistle-blowing complaint, then the Integrity Commissioner transfers the matter to a deputy minister. Why? Because he hasn’t got the resources to investigate

this properly or do the job. They're saying, "Pass it off to the deputy minister." So what we have is the civil service investigating the civil service. Where's the independence? Where's the transparency? There isn't any.

As a deputy minister is in the line of authority—and everybody in the listening public should know that we have a minister who is an elected public official, an MPP. The deputy minister is an unelected public official who is second in command in the ministry and in effect is the operational head. So you're saying to the person who's whistle-blowing in that ministry, to the Integrity Commissioner, "Pass it off to the deputy minister to look into this whistle-blowing complaint by an employee of that ministry." Who seriously would think about bringing forth a whistle-blowing complaint in that situation?

The situation is dire. We're not just talking about waste. You can talk about waste within a government, especially this one, in terms of overspending, doing things that aren't right, but if you had a serious situation, a grave situation—if you want to use that terminology—where the environment is being impacted, where the ministry has decided not to enforce their own laws when some company is polluting into the water, why would we have a procedure which delays reporting that? Why would we have a procedure which would allow the deputy minister to cover it up? It doesn't make sense.

As the deputy minister is in the line of authority, in some way this reflects on their management skills, and an impartial investigation will not result. The Integrity Commissioner, as an officer reporting to Parliament, should not be subject to having a person designated by the Premier. This is clearly interference with impartiality. It's an interference with my right as a member of Parliament, the privilege that I enjoy as a member of Parliament, to do my job. The Premier's office has gone out of their way on more than one occasion to make sure that we can't do our job here. The classic example is Bill 107, the time-allocated bill, making sure there are no more public hearings, making sure this bill has to pass when they want it to pass, making sure that over 200 people aren't going to be able to make a presentation. That's the kind of government power that is wrong.

Furthermore, the Integrity Commissioner cannot ensure the quality or accuracy of the report if it is not done by the Integrity Commissioner's staff. So the deputy minister is doing a report, and all they're required to do is send the report back to the Integrity Commissioner. How does the Integrity Commissioner know that they've done a thorough investigation? How does he know that this deputy minister didn't overlook evidence or choose to overlook evidence? All they have to do is hand in a report. The referral should be removed and sections 118 and 119 need to be rewritten to ensure that the Integrity Commissioner can do his job and make sure that we have an independent and transparent system.

The next section is section 122. This goes to the heart of the matter. It limits when the Integrity Commissioner can investigate. If the issue is integrity, then the Integrity

Commissioner reporting to this Legislature is the correct person to deal with it. Furthermore, the Integrity Commissioner is perceived as impartial and not biased.

Subsection 122(5): If the matter had been dealt with, it would not have been referred to the Integrity Commissioner for action. Many of the clauses of section 6 presuppose an answer. For example, this section states "doing so is in the public interest...." Without a proper investigation, this normally cannot be answered.

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Section 127 gives the party in power the ability to cover up any illegal or unethical practices. If the substance of the deliberations of the executive council are illegal or unethical, they are protected from investigation. This is different from interfering with a police investigation.

I want to go to that section of the bill right now to make sure I've got the right one there. I believe it was 127(b) that I was looking at. Let's just make sure here. I'll read section 127:

"Restriction on powers

"127(1) The Integrity Commissioner may not require the provision of information, the production of a document or thing or the giving of an answer if the Deputy Attorney General certifies that the provision, production or answer,

"(a) might interfere with or impede the detection, investigation or prosecution of an offence; or

"(b) might reveal the substance of deliberations of the executive council or any of its committees without authority to do so."

Come on. Clause 127(1)(b)? Where are we operating here, in a banana republic, where the Premier and the cabinet can do anything they want? If you're going to give the Integrity Commissioner, who is an officer of the Legislature, the power to look into whistle-blowing and they cannot ask for and request documents from the cabinet and the Premier, who may in fact be involved in the wrongdoing, then we're not accomplishing anything here other than making sure that, as Allan Cutler said, this is a bill of cover-up to make sure that you can't get at the information.

Clause 127(3)(b): The Integrity Commissioner must be able to see all documents, including those that were prepared by legal counsel. For example, the actions that are under investigation may not have conflicted with the legal advice that had been given. This would be important to know.

Just to put that in context, clause 127(3)(b) is another section which limits the Integrity Commissioner's ability to do his job. Just to read that:

"The Integrity Commissioner may not require the provision of information, the production of a document or thing or the giving of an answer if the provision, production or answer might disclose,

"(a) information that is subject to solicitor-client privilege"—that is ridiculous. This is supposed to be an open and transparent government and they're going hide

behind solicitor-client privilege when we're dealing with something that might be in the grave public danger—"or

"(b) information prepared by or for counsel for a ministry or a public body for use in giving legal advice or in contemplation of or for use in litigation."

Come on. Why would we be putting solicitor-client privilege in the way when we're dealing with something that in the view of the Integrity Commissioner affects the grave public interest of this province? You can't have exemptions such as that because it makes this situation untenable. It goes back to what the Supreme Court jurist Frank Iacobucci talked about. Why do you even need whistle-blowing legislation? If the leaders of the government are not prepared to lead, are not prepared to have core values, are not prepared to make sure that the public service does their job, are not prepared to make sure that the hired political staff, whether for the Premier or the cabinet, do their job in an ethical manner, then of course the rules are going to be broken. By why go through a hypocritical exercise such as this, creating restrictions, limiting the power of the Integrity Commissioner and making the Integrity Commissioner an officer of the deputy minister, as opposed to this Legislature, if you're really serious about dealing with whistle-blowing?

You have to ask yourself the question, "If I was a whistle-blower, would I come forward?" Why would you come forward if the deck is stacked against you not only in procedure, not only in what the Integrity Commissioner can do, but also in what the government, the Premier and his cabinet can hide? We know this government is pretty good at that.

In subsection 129(1) and throughout section 129, the Integrity Commissioner is required to make a report to the person under whom the commissioner made the referral. This is direct interference with the Integrity Commissioner's office. The commissioner reports to this Legislature and is responsible only for reporting to this Legislature. That is almost a contempt of this Legislature. I may have to look into that even further because, quite frankly, you may want to delegate—and perhaps they can do it under the Members' Integrity Act—in dealing with not only this act or another act in terms of having the Integrity Commissioner do other functions. It's another thing to say to the Integrity Commissioner, "You have to make your report to the person under whom you make the referral." That is wrong. That is a contempt of this Parliament, because that report should go to the House. Why is it going back to the deputy minister who is supposed to be reporting on the whistle-blowing? It should go back to this House. It's like telling the Environmental Commissioner, "We want you to go out and check all things about the environment, but we sure don't want you going back to the House. You bring it back to the deputy minister, and we'll look after it." This is wrong. It's contempt of this Legislature. It's an infringement on my right as a parliamentarian. I'm not going to make this a point of privilege, because I can do that on another day. But it's contempt, and they know it.

Now, section 130—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Now is a good time to do it.

Mr. Tascona: I'm just getting going. Ask a lawyer what the time is, and he'll tell you how to make the watch. I'm just rolling here. I don't know why I only have 60 minutes to deal with this.

Subsection 130(1) makes it optional for the Integrity Commissioner to report or not report the wrongdoing. At the least, a general outline of each situation should be given and tabled in Parliament. The Integrity Commissioner reports to the Legislature. They're saying, "It's optional. You don't have to go back to the Legislature to report the wrongdoing." I don't think the government thought this thing through, or they have no respect for the parliamentary system with which we deal. They're in contempt. The Integrity Commissioner has to come back to this Legislature to report wrongdoing. For anything else to happen is totally wrong.

Interjection.

Mr. Tascona: I've read the bill. You should try reading it.

Section 140: This is confusing. One of the major problems is a lack of understanding and expertise in whistle-blowing issues. This is obviously evident in whomever the Minister of Government Services asked to draft this or do the discussions. Getting back to the point, there was no public consultation on this bill before they got into it. The only people they talked to were the public sector unions, because there is another section in this bill which deals with getting rid of the successor rights legislation that was put in by the previous government. That's going to be removed. Those are the only people who were consulted.

Back to section 140: Three different ways of handling the same situation will result in an uneven application of remedies and mixed messages. Also, the public servant with a "final and binding settlement by arbitration" has no ability to appeal, because we're dealing with a public sector union employee going to the grievance settlement board and a non-union employee going to the labour relations board. These are quasi-judicial settings. What would be better would be one impartial body capable of mediating results. The Integrity Commissioner could do this. If the public servant does not have a satisfactory result, then the court system should be open to them for remedy. The whistle-blower goes through all this exercise to protect themselves, then management doesn't like it, forces them into a quasi-judicial setting and they have no right of appeal because they're deciding whether the whistle-blower should have gone forth in the first place.

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Then we have subsection 140(11). It is expensive to defend yourself. At least the public servant should be able to recover appropriate costs, including legal, training, living and accommodation. Under this bill, the public servant has no entitlement to their legal costs, having to protect themselves for having gone forth in the first place with

the whistle-blowing. It is unbelievable, why anyone would put themselves on the line.

I want to quote from the other night, from Mr. Barrett, the member from Halton. He spoke about Bill 158. This was on November 22. He said, "Again, we're debating Bill 158 this evening, commonly known, I guess, as amendments to the Public Service Act—the full title is the Public Service of Ontario Statute Law Amendment Act. There may be warrant to refer to it as the whistle-blower act, but for that to occur would require a bit of work. It would require, I assume, some amendments to toughen this up a bit, because there is a perception out there already that this particular piece of legislation would not be that effective in enshrining whistle-blowing within the public service...."

He goes on to say, "We know that the function of whistle-blowing is so important, as we saw in the exposé of corruption in Ottawa. I think of heavy industry; I know it's very important for employees, whether they're union, non-union or management, to be able to pick up that phone or write that letter to make authorities aware of issues, whether they be government inspectors, people within the community or the media, to ensure that some rights are rectified. On that point alone, I feel that this piece of legislation is a bit of a letdown.

"Going back to the election, I remember many of the members opposite, and the McGuinty Liberals in general, promising taxpayers that government business would be public business. We see no public consultation to date on this one—obviously, no public consultation on a public service act. There is a challenge out there to ensure that, unlike Bill 107, there is a full agenda of public consultation across the province with respect to this public service act. We will find out whether this is yet another commitment from this government that has the potential to be unfulfilled.

"This Legislative Assembly debated a motion a few weeks ago that delineated 50 McGuinty Liberal broken commitments, and the number continues to grow. Today, we may well be adding a broken promise to make government business public if we don't get full hearings on this particular piece of legislation." I see no commitment to that.

"Yesterday—and this was mentioned quite recently—we learned the Attorney General was speaking with a forked tongue, if I can use that expression, when he promised additional hearings on Bill 107 and then reversed himself. I can't understand why Liberals refused to come forward in a forthright way. Over the three years of this government, what I have detected is what I consider a chronic situation as far as telling the truth. Endless policy reversals on the Caledonia crisis come to mind, demonstrating again that members opposite are prepared to say absolutely anything if it will get them re-elected.

"If you tried to take one of these commitments to the bank, you could well be charged with trafficking in counterfeit currency."

He goes on to say, "Today, we're debating reform of the public service. When we talk about the public service, it's important to break it down to those men and women, those good individuals who make up our public service, the public servants. Public servants are there to serve the public interest.

"I consider myself a public servant...."

"I received some information from a fellow named Randy Robinson, with OPSEU, a communication to me which made it clear that he did not want to see any kind of structure or system where public employees have their comments vetoed by somebody else in the managerial chain of command. Obviously, there can be no legislated or regulated structure that would allow that to occur. We know informally within the workplace, obviously, that those who report to others, who have supervisors—so many people—could be gun-shy on an issue like this. When I talk about whistle-blowing, I think of people like Mr. Allan Cutler, who exposed the Liberal sponsorship scandal.

"This could well be a major deficiency of this particular legislation. Another major deficiency with this McGuinty regime is its inability to directly tackle issues. Another major deficiency is this Liberal government's lack of interest in real debate, as we have seen in recent weeks, obviously, with Bill 107—that number has come up a number of times, not only this evening but today—shutting out stakeholders who deserve input on human rights. That is an outrage, obviously. If they're not interested in real debate, quite honestly I see no reason for us to be here this evening. I see no reason to be here either.

"For this reason, Speaker, I call for adjournment of the debate."

And so do I, Mr. Speaker. I call for adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker: Mr. Tascona has moved adjournment of the debate. Shall the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

There are five standing. Call in the members. There will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1935 to 2005.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour will please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

All those opposed will please stand and be recorded by the Clerk.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 7; the nays are 22.

The Acting Speaker: The motion is lost.

The member from Barrie—Simcoe—Bradford has the floor.

Mr. Tascona: I rise again. I was interrupted briefly, but I'm prepared to continue. I still think I need more than 60 minutes, but I'm limited.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): He can't make his point.

Mr. Tascona: My good friend from Durham has joined me here, hopefully for a short while. But he's here, in spirit and in body.

I'm going to continue along and deal with this bill. Yes, we rang the bells here tonight, and there's a good reason why we're ringing them; everybody knows. I haven't seen a commitment for public hearings on Bill 158.

I go back to what I'm talking about here in terms of values. Supreme Court jurist Frank Iacobucci talks about leadership, and there is a lack of leadership in a government when they have to resort to whistle-blowing legislation. This isn't whistle-blowing legislation. There are two parts to this: Number one, it's usurping the role of this Legislature by having the Office of the Integrity Commissioner report to a deputy minister, which is contemptuous; secondly, they're covering up whistle-blowing. The way they've got it set up here with respect to procedure, if you're challenged on this and you have to protect your job, you go to a quasi-judicial procedure and you get no costs, even if you win. You have no right of appeal, even if you lose. What kind of a system is that? That's an unfair system. It's essentially making sure that there isn't going to be any whistle-blowing when this government's around, because they have exempted the Premier's office, they have exempted the Cabinet Office, with all their political players. They hide behind solicitor-client privilege. There is no way that the Office of the Integrity Commissioner can get at documents that are covered by solicitor-client privilege or were used to give a litigation opinion. We're not talking about a law office here; we're talking about the government, which is supposed to be transparent, which is supposed to do the people's business. We're talking about situations that have to fall under the definition of a grave danger to the public, yet they have the right to restrict access; they have the right to tell the Office of the Integrity Commissioner, "Do what we want."

The biggest problem I've got here, among others, is the role of the Office of the Integrity Commissioner. They've got to come up with a better procedure here. You cannot have an officer of the Legislature reporting to a deputy minister, and then reporting back to the deputy minister with respect to the report that was done by the deputy minister, which could be very focused in terms of what they're looking at and leave out the evidence that needs to be looked at, because all they do is get a report.

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I started out here tonight as the speaker. Though the Liberals had an opportunity to put up a speaker, they put nobody up because they don't want to debate this bill, which is kind of opposite to what we're trying to do here in terms of coming up with the best bill we possibly can. So what they're trying to do out here is shut out debate, just like what they're doing with Bill 107: They're shutting out public comment and public consultation. There was no public consultation on Bill 158, and there's certainly a lack of it on Bill 107.

The government should really be thinking about what they're doing here in terms of what they're trying to accomplish in this session. Quite frankly, what's coming out here is that they're bringing in whistle-blowing legislation to make themselves look good, when in fact what they're trying to make sure is that there is no whistle-blowing, that nothing is going to happen.

I don't know whether they're going to time-allocate this. I guess they'll decide when the House leader finishes his paper and gets around to deciding what he wants to do tonight. Is he going to time-allocate Bill 158? I don't know. They time-allocated Bill 107 because they didn't want any more public consultation. They have fundamentally changed the human rights act in this province, and they don't want to talk about it anymore. The Attorney General said, "Let's get it back in here, let's vote on it and let's get it over with, because we've heard enough." They can't hide behind Barbara Hall anymore because she doesn't want any part of it. She's the commissioner.

Interjection: Or June Callwood.

Mr. Tascona: Yeah, June Callwood's another one. I think the member for Halton had a quote from June Callwood. Then I think the member for Halton said:

"But further to Bill 158, and further to Bill 107, if the Premier was truly interested in debate and improving debate in this Legislature, I feel he could the right thing and allow stakeholders to have that input requested. Shutting out stakeholders, in my view, is despicable. If this government, this Premier and the members opposite aren't interested in true debate and input, I again question why we are here, and in questioning why we're here, for that reason, I call for adjournment of the House."

And so do I, Mr. Speaker. I call for adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Mr. Tascona has moved adjournment of the House. Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2012 to 2042.

The Acting Speaker: Mr. Tascona has moved adjournment of the House. All those in favour, please stand and be recognized.

All those opposed, please stand and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk-at-the-Table: The ayes are 8; the nays are 22.

The Acting Speaker: The motion is lost.

The member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford has the floor.

Mr. Tascona: I'm very pleased to get back to the debate here before I was so rudely interrupted. This is a serious bill. It's time for this government to start taking Bill 158 seriously.

I want to point out another problem here. It's clause 126(1)(b), where it says, "The Integrity Commissioner may require any public servant or former public servant

to produce any relevant document or thing that may be in his or her possession or under his or her control if, in the opinion of the commissioner, the document or thing may be relevant to the investigation." When I think about it, what do you mean by "thing"? Is this the Addams Family or what? I mean, what are we talking about here? "Thing"?

But the real point here is, what happens if the public service is under an obligation to keep information confidential under laws or regulations pertaining to privacy or official secrets? What about employer-imposed confidentiality agreements that have the force of contractual law? This has not been thought through, and quite frankly, I'm disappointed big time.

"Report on conclusion of investigation," subsection 129(1): You see, unlike other members across the aisle, I have read this bill, twice, if not more—I have lost count—because I can't make out what's going on. It says, "On concluding an investigation of a disclosure under this part, the Integrity Commissioner shall make a report to the person to whom the commissioner made the referral under subsection 118(2)." If the matter was investigated by the person to whom the commissioner referred it, then what would the commissioner report to that person, and why? It's a rhetorical question. It doesn't make any sense. What is this? You pitch it back and forth. He refers the complaint to the deputy minister, the deputy minister does a report, then the Integrity Commissioner gets the report, and then he's got to refer it back to the deputy minister. What are we playing here? Children's games? What is this?

The next part is subsection 129(2), dealing with the referral. Really, what this is here is too much buck-passing and bureaucracy. This is inefficient and provides no certainty to the person making the complaint. People take a huge risk when they come forward to accuse their superiors of corruption or other wrongdoing, and they will not feel secure enough to come forward if they don't even know who will be reviewing their case or receiving the final report. That is a valid point, in terms of what we're trying to do.

That's why I say this bill is not only a contempt of Parliament in terms of how they deal with the office of the Integrity Commissioner; it's also an affront to the public with respect to the people who have values. The leaders of this government are basically covering up what they want to cover up. They're not accountable, none of their staff is accountable, and they aren't restricted from access to the official Integrity Commissioner. That's wrong.

I can tell you that this is a real problem. We want the best legislation we can have. As Supreme Court jurist Frank Iacobucci indicated, "Whistle-blowing legislation is not common at all. It's a failure of leadership at the top to do their job, to do it well, to impart the values that they want in the public service to the public service." This government obviously has failed in that task. They think it's great to come out and say, "Oh, we're whistle-blowing," but what they're doing here is making sure that

the whistle-blower is definitely not going to be blowing anymore. The whistle-blower is going to be out of the public service. That's what they're looking to do.

On that note, I look forward to the questions and comments.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I listened to the comments that were made by the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, even though it took a bit longer to deliver than I had anticipated when we started tonight. I was going to talk about the whistle-blower section, so I will, when I start next, reinforce a great deal of what he said. But let me say generally that I have concerns about this whole section in terms of whether it will be effective. I listened to the minister on the day the bill was introduced. I heard him say very clearly that the whistle-blower protection would be given to the Integrity Commissioner, so he would do the investigation etc., and that he hoped the proposed legislation would ensure that allegations of wrongdoing could be effectively brought forward and properly addressed.

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The problem I see is that, as currently written, the sections that provide this authority and set out the processes by which whistle-blowing will occur have a lot of discretion that, in some cases, I think is unwarranted and have other areas where the commissioner would be very much too structured in terms of what he can look at and what he should be able to look at. At the end of the day, I'm not sure that whole section, as it's currently written, would give much comfort either to someone who works in the public sector right now or someone who is leaving the public sector and wants to make a disclosure. I'm not sure there's a lot here that would give them comfort to do that, from two perspectives: first, from the sense that the disclosure will be effectively investigated, that there will be effective recommendations provided and that those recommendations will be lived up to by the minister responsible; and second, I'm not sure they're going to have much comfort that there aren't going to be reprisals and, if they are still a member of the public service, that after the disclosure they will continue to be a member of the public service offering public services to Ontarians.

So I have similar concerns with respect to the whistle-blower protection as those raised by the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, and I appreciate his analysis and also the analysis he put on the record done by Allan Cutler in this regard.

Mr. Vic Dhillon (Brampton West-Mississauga): It's a pleasure to speak on Bill 158, the Public Service of Ontario Statute Law Amendment Act. Our government respects and values the dedication that public servants bring to their work. That's why this bill is very important for those in the public service in Ontario and ultimately for the people of Ontario.

Ontario's public service is second to none. Legislation will help ensure that the public service will continue to be accountable, ethical, non-partisan and professional.

Our current public service legislation has had only minor revisions over the past decades. It has not been significantly changed since first created in 1878. We have consulted extensively with our bargaining agents, current and former ministry executives, government agencies and members of all parties. Feedback was positive and constructive.

Successive NDP and Conservative governments failed to proclaim existing, albeit weaker, whistle-blower protection under the current PSA. As a matter of fact, I'll read a quote from Mr. John Tory: "One government after another didn't do it. I think it is high time that it is being done and I'm glad they're doing it."

We're delivering on our commitments to put whistle-blower protection in place. Our proposed rules are stronger, as they give authority to an independent officer, the Integrity Commissioner, to investigate all allegations of wrongdoing. It gives the Integrity Commissioner the power and authority and resources to investigate and publicly report all cases of wrongdoing.

Mr. O'Toole: Every time I listen to the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, I am impressed by his grasp of the details. There are 142 pages to this bill, amending four separate sections, and there are 156 sections that reference various amendments. It's sort of an omnibus bill in terms of the Public Service of Ontario Statute Law Amendment Act.

They quoted Mr. Tory on this, and you would know his position on this: He is supportive of that particular section of the bill. What troubles me most when I think of almost the contradiction is that here is the Liberal McGuinty government, and I think of the sponsorship scandal in Ottawa. I think it's about time they called in Judge Gomery. They, of all people, being the authors of this bill, should be somewhat suspect. The way they treated Allan Cutler in terms of his role as the principal whistle-blower in Ontario, indeed in Canada, was more than shoddy.

The member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford tried to make eminently clear that in 1993 the NDP brought this bill in, and it remains unproclaimed. This is the problem.

I would say to you that we are in support of that provision, the whistle-blower protection in that section. The idea is that we protect it. It's unclear, however, why the Liberals would create an entirely new piece of legislation, when there's one only waiting to be proclaimed by the Lieutenant Governor—

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I was all set to stand up here and talk about the fact that this bill had not changed significantly since 1978, but took a closer look at some of the background and, gosh, it's 1878. It still hasn't changed since the 19th century. Okay, so let's make some changes.

The member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford earlier had some fairly important things to say about this bill. He said—and let's use his exact words—"The whistle-blowing part of the bill is certainly welcomed. I look forward to seeing how that's actually going to operate."

For the member, now you can see how it's going to operate.

He was asking earlier about what are "things" in the context of being able to access persons, papers and things. Some examples of things could be a CD, a DVD, a computer file, a backup tape, a diskette, a computer chip. I can think of any number of examples of things.

Another person who talked very strongly about this particular bill was—let's repeat it—John Tory. John Tory said, "One government after another didn't do it."

Mr. O'Toole: That's the same quote.

Mr. Delaney: It's an important quote. Let's repeat it. "I think it is high time that it is being done and I'm glad that they're doing to it," referring to our government. We're doing it. For more than a century this piece of legislation hasn't changed. What would this world be like if you were running your business based on 1870s technology? This isn't 1870s technology. This is going to be a 21st-century law. That's basically what this thing has done.

John Tory likes it. For once we're in accord with John Tory.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford has two minutes in which to respond.

Mr. Tascona: I'm very pleased to comment on the members for Nickel Belt, Brampton West-Mississauga, Durham and Mississauga West. If we're going to do quotes, I was quoted in the Globe and Mail by Karen Howlett. It says, "Tory MPP Joe Tascona welcomed the whistle-blowing protections but questioned why the government would have the Integrity Commissioner probe allegations rather than the province's Ombudsman, who has the expertise and resources."

I've been clear all night. I want a better whistle-blowing protection procedure and I've set out very clearly that the government doesn't like to hear ideas. They don't like to hear anything that might question their regal authority to rule us all, especially in this Legislature. They like to whip us good in this place because they want it their own way.

I'm offering suggestions with respect to the whistle-blowing because I believe that it can be improved, it can be more transparent, it can be better, it can actually serve the public interest, which it's designed to do.

The member for Durham supported me on this, as he regularly does. But the member for Mississauga West talks about things because he's going back to his Addam's Family days. I would say, define it. If that's what things are, define it. Put it in there and say we can know exactly what we're dealing with. Anyone who wants to whistle-blow in this province deserves to know what they're getting into before they do it, that they're going to be protected, that they are not going to be compromised, that they are going to be put in a position where they can actually protect the public interest rather than being someone who can be tossed overboard by the Liberal government.

We want better. Whistle-blowing is something that can be respected if it's done properly. All we're asking

for this government is to do better than they normally do, and Bill 107 is an example of them doing nothing to hear the public.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Martel: It's a pleasure to participate in the debate this evening. I'm going to focus my remarks entirely on the whistle-blower protection section. The government can accept what I have to say or reject what I have to say. That's certainly up to them, but I would hope that some of what I have to say will be taken into account and some changes made to this particular section.

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I want to deal with what the minister said both in his press release and in the House with respect to this particular section. Mr. Phillips said, on November 2, "Our proposed whistle-blower protection will give authority to an independent officer of the Legislature, the Integrity Commissioner, to investigate and publicly report on serious allegations of wrongdoing." Again, in the House later that day, when he introduced the bill and made some remark about it, he said, "Our proposed whistle-blower protection will give authority to an independent officer of the Legislature, the Integrity Commissioner, to investigate and publicly report on serious allegations of wrongdoing. The proposed legislation would ensure that allegations of wrongdoing could be effectively brought forward and properly addressed."

The concerns I'm going to raise here in this section really are that the bill as drafted I don't think is going to give comfort to someone who is going to whistle-blow or who wants to whistle-blow. Secondly, I'm very concerned about the restrictions I see on the authority of the Integrity Commissioner, certainly around the processes by which he can investigate disclosures that are made. And the third concern I want to raise is, if we're going to allow an independent officer of the Legislature the power to investigate disclosures—and I agree with that—why aren't we having the Ombudsman do exactly that? Because from my point of view the Ombudsman, who is an officer independent of the Legislature, appointed by all of us, already has the staff, already has the investigative authority, already has the experience in dealing with important public policy matters, and as we have seen from this particular Ombudsman, has no hesitation or concern about taking those head on. I don't know why we wouldn't be giving the Ombudsman the power to investigate whistle-blowing and disclosure, because I think that's where the power should rest.

Let me deal first with the whole disclosure section, section 114, which sets out how this is going to take place. Section 114 says, "Where a public servant or former public servant has reason to believe that there has been wrongdoing, he or she may disclose the wrongdoing in accordance with the procedures established under section 115."

Section 115 lays out two proposals that I don't think are going to work at all. The first is:

"Directives, Public Service Commission

"115(1) The Public Service Commission may by directive establish procedures to deal with disclosures of wrongdoing by,

"(a) a public servant who works in a ministry; and

"(b) a former public servant who worked in a ministry immediately before ceasing to be a public servant."

The second section after that then deals with Management Board:

"(2) The Management Board of Cabinet may by directive establish procedures to deal with disclosures of wrongdoing by"—the same categories of individuals that I've just described.

I think this section is going to be totally irrelevant. I don't think that public servants or former public servants who feel strongly enough that they want to disclose government wrongdoing are going to take any comfort in following directives that are being set out either by the Public Service Commission or by Management Board of Cabinet. Those people who are whistle-blowing who want to deal with disclosures are doing so because they have no faith in the system that is currently operating before them. They have no faith that if they go to their manager, something is going to be done, or if they go to their assistant deputy manager, something is going to be done, or if they go to the deputy minister, something is going to be done. So I don't think they're going to have any faith in a process that is outlined in directives either by the Public Service Commission or by cabinet; that they're going to get an independent, serious, legitimate review of their concerns. On the contrary, I think people are going to look at this whole section and dismiss it entirely as a mechanism by which they might have their legitimate concerns resolved. I think people who are going to whistle-blow will look at this and see, "There's no room for me here. There's no place for me here. This is not a serious attempt on the part of government to put in place processes and procedures that allow me to put forward a disclosure in a way that's going to be reasonably and legitimately investigated and dealt with." So I think that whole section, frankly, is going to be irrelevant and people are not going to go first to look at those particular directives and use those directives when they want to raise a concern and want to disclose something.

That means that the section around going to the Integrity Commissioner really has to be clear, has to be legitimate, and has to be toughened up a whole heck of a lot, so that, under section 116, the disclosure to the Integrity Commissioner, can occur. I think this is going to be people's first step. I think they're going to disregard the other directives and this will be their first step. It says:

"116. A public servant or former public servant may disclose wrongdoings to the Integrity Commissioner if,

"(a) the public servant or former public servant has reason to believe it would not be appropriate to disclose the wrongdoing in accordance with the directives issued under section 115."

Well, I think the public servant is going to think it's not going to be appropriate because nothing is going to be done under those directives.

"(b) the public servant or former public servant has already disclosed the wrongdoing in accordance with the directives issued under section 115 and has concerns that the matter is not being dealt with appropriately."

That's the very concern that I raised originally: Most people, because they are trying to deal with allegations about their employer, are not going to use directives from their employer to raise those concerns. They're not going to see that as a legitimate process, and frankly, I would think that they would see those directives as just a huge delay in allowing them to actually come forward with legitimate concerns and raise them in a legitimate way.

"(c) directives applying to the public servant or former public servant have not been issued..."

That's even more bizarre. If the government is going to be consistent and issue directives or get the appropriate bodies to issue directives, then the government should do that. If there aren't going to be directives for certain categories of workers or certain workplaces, what's the point? I just think the immediate referral, right to the Integrity Commissioner, would be the most appropriate thing to do, because I don't think anything less is actually going to work.

Let me deal with some more of my concerns in this section. So you disclose to the Integrity Commissioner, and then the Integrity Commissioner has some options. The Integrity Commissioner looks at the complaint or looks at the allegation or the disclosure, and the commissioner can decide not to deal with the disclosure based on a number of conditions. In section 117, there are a number of conditions under which the Integrity Commissioner cannot initiate a referral or cannot even initiate an assessment of the situation in any event, so his or her hands start to be severely tied from this section on.

The one that's the most interesting is paragraph 8, where it says, "The subject matter of the disclosure relates solely to a public policy decision." I've got to tell you, working in the public service, public policy decisions are going to be at the heart of the matter, aren't they? This is what the matter is all about, that there are going to be public policy decisions made, public policy issues rendered, that people are going to have concerns with. Maybe they're bad decisions, maybe they're wrong decisions, maybe there is a hint of criminal negligence, or otherwise. Of course it's going to be public policy decisions that public servants are going to have concerns with and perhaps want to disclose. What else would they be trying to disclose?

The fact that the Integrity Commissioner "shall not" do an assessment or "shall not" deal with a disclosure if the subject matter relates to a public policy decision is, to my mind, just ridiculous. It is a mechanism to ensure that whistle-blowing never takes place. I hope that's not the government's intent, but for goodness' sake, when you read that section, that surely is the outcome; that surely is the consequence. It is so broad, it is so large, and because

so much of what the public sector deals with is public sector policy decisions, the very fact that the commissioner shall not deal with disclosures that relate to this matter really effectively means that we're not going to have any whistle-blowing at all. Unless that section is entirely removed, frankly I don't think that there are going to be any grounds for the Integrity Commissioner to investigate any disclosure. So that whole paragraph 8 should be taken out entirely if the government is really serious about allowing people to come forward.

The next section has to do with subsection 118(3). Section 118 deals with the referrals that the Integrity Commissioner makes with respect to disclosures. Again, I'm at a bit of a loss as to why the ministry would have the commissioner do a referral first back to the same people in whom the whistle-blower probably has no confidence in the first place; that's what this whole section deals with. It says that the Integrity Commissioner can receive a disclosure of wrongdoing, and then the Integrity Commissioner shall decide who the matter should be referred to. That matter can be referred back to a deputy minister, can be referred to "Any individual prescribed under clause 71(1)(b)." That's in the regulation-making section, so that's virtually anyone, because it's left to regulation to decide. The matter can be referred to the chair of a public body, the matter can be referred to the secretary of cabinet or the matter can be referred to "an individual designated by the Premier for the purposes of this section." Will that ever send a chill through the public service very quickly, if an individual designated by the Premier is the one whom the matter can be referred to. I just think that that sends a message to the public service that is all wrong. If you are a public servant and you are concerned about a public policy decision by this particular government or another, having your matter investigated by someone designated by the Premier will give you no comfort whatsoever that your legitimate concern is going to be dealt with at all.

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I question this whole section. If someone is taking the chance to go to the Integrity Commissioner with a disclosure, why on earth would the Integrity Commissioner be referring that important matter back to some of the same people that that whistle-blower no doubt has no confidence or no faith in? If they did, the matter would be resolved. If they thought they could go to the deputy minister, they would. So to refer matters back to the same individuals that some of these folks are going to have no confidence in is beyond me. I don't understand the rationale for these types of referrals to occur, because I think at the end of the day people who might whistle-blow are going to look at this section and say, "Clearly, the government is not interested in hearing what I have to say. Clearly, the government is more interested in putting up roadblocks that will ensure that I do not get a fair hearing, that my concern is not legitimately dealt with. So why should I bother?" And they won't bother. That is what the consequence is of this whole section that allows referrals of these matters back to some of the same

individuals that people in the public service would already have no confidence in, in terms of whistle-blowing. I don't know what the government's going to do with that whole section, but I have serious concerns about that.

Let me deal with subsection 122(1): "The Integrity Commissioner may initiate an investigation of a disclosure of wrongdoing only if...." Now we get out of the referral section and we go to the matter where the Integrity Commissioner might actually be able to order an investigation or undertake an investigation. But it's interesting, because the section says that the Integrity Commissioner can only do that, can force an investigation of a disclosure of wrongdoing only if:

"(a) the commissioner is not satisfied with the report about the disclosure received under section 118 or 121;

"(b) a person who has received a referral under subsection 118(2) has referred the disclosure back to the commissioner....;

"(c) a person who has received a referral under subsection 118(2) has not delivered a report about the disclosure within the time period required...."

Again, this whole section puts some significant restrictions on the Integrity Commissioner that I think will ultimately lead to no whistle-blowing going on. If the commissioner is not satisfied with a report about the disclosure—from my point of view, in many cases that's going to be clearly obvious: You're going back to the same people who probably didn't want to deal with the matter in the first place. That's why you have a whistle-blower trying to do something, because the matter at hand was never dealt with either by the head of the public body or by the deputy minister. I'm not sure what you're going to get in the way of a satisfactory report back if they are, frankly, the problem in the first place.

Secondly, an investigation might occur if the person who should have done the referral—the deputy minister etc.—has referred it back to the commissioner. There are some descriptions about how that will occur; maybe there's a conflict of interest, maybe there's a vested interest etc. So that section doesn't make a whole lot of sense to me. If a person hasn't given a report back to the commissioner in the time limits in this bill, what's the penalty for that? What a way to send a chill through the bureaucracy, or what a way to send a message that your legitimate complaint is not going to be dealt with. How could it be that, if the Integrity Commissioner refers the matter to the heads of some of these organizations, they don't have to make a report back in the time frame that's listed in the bill? What is that? And why is that? What are the penalties for doing that? And if that's allowed in the bill, that the deputy minister doesn't have to send something back or the chair of the board doesn't have to send something back and doesn't have to meet the time limits, what message does that send to people in the bureaucracy who are interested in raising a legitimate complaint? The message it sends is that the government is not interested in ensuring that an allegation of wrongdoing is legitimately going to be dealt with. That section

should be out entirely. There should be no reason, no excuse why, if a referral is made, the deputy minister or the chair of a public body or the secretary of cabinet doesn't have to meet the timelines that are set out by the Integrity Commissioner. They should absolutely have to, or there should be penalties involved.

If you look at the section 122(5), following along, it also says that "the Integrity Commissioner may initiate an investigation" in this subsection "if, in the opinion of the commissioner, doing so is in the public interest and would not interfere with or impede the other person or body in dealing with the matter." Frankly, I don't care about the other person or the other body in dealing with the matter. If it's in the public interest, if it's important enough to warrant a full investigation because it's in the public interest, I really don't care what anybody else is doing, what any other body is doing, what investigation, what referral, what report, whatever is going on. The Integrity Commissioner at all times, if he or she believes it is in the public interest to force an investigation, should be doing that in the public interest, and that section should be clarified to say that at all times it's the public interest that comes first in terms of the whistle-blowing that goes on, regardless of any other investigation that might be occurring at the same time.

Let me deal with section 126. This is the section that deals with the power of investigation and sets out some of the requirements that the Integrity Commissioner can make with respect to public servants or former public servants providing information to him or her or producing documents to him or her, or answering questions under oath etc. I'm concerned about this section, because if I look at section 113 of the bill, there seems to be a contradiction in the two sections. Under section 126, it certainly says the Integrity Commissioner may require a public servant to disclose, to provide information, to answer questions under oath, to give evidence under oath etc. But if you go to section 113 of the bill, there are restrictions on disclosures. It says:

"(2) Nothing in this part authorizes a public servant or former public servant to make a disclosure to the Integrity Commissioner of anything,

"(a) that would reveal the substance of deliberations of the executive council or any of its committees without authority to do so;

"(b) that is subject to solicitor-client privilege; or

"(c) that is prepared by or for counsel for a ministry or a public body for use in giving legal advice or in contemplation of or for use in litigation."

So clearly there are restrictions in this section about what a public servant or former public servant could disclose, and those same restrictions do not appear in section 126, where it clearly says that a public servant or former public servant must "provide any information that he or she may have if, in the opinion of the commissioner, the information may be relevant to the investigation," or must "produce any relevant document or thing that may be in his or her possession or under his or her control if, in the opinion the commissioner, the document

or thing may be relevant.” Clearly there’s a contradiction between those two sections that the government has to sort out.

I’m also concerned about the fact that you don’t have to provide information if it’s under “solicitor-client privilege.” I tell you, for at least 18 months now I’ve been trying to get the legal costs associated with the Deskin-Wynberg court case, and the Ministry of the Attorney General, at every step of the way, has been using solicitor-client privilege to block me from getting access to that information. We are now at arbitration at the freedom of information office trying to get this resolved. If that’s what I’ve already experienced just trying to get some idea of court costs paid by this government for the Deskin-Wynberg court case, just imagine what will come under the rubric of solicitor-client privilege for the purpose of this act and for the purpose of whistle-blowing. If this provision stays in, I can tell you that people won’t even bother, because it won’t be worth it.

Let me conclude by saying this: If the government is going to go forward with whistle-blower protection, and I want them to, I hope that they will take into account what I’ve said. More importantly, I think that having the Integrity Commissioner deal with this doesn’t make any sense at all, from the perspective of an individual who has only two staff, who has very little experience in investigations. I know that the bill says very clearly that from time to time “the Integrity Commissioner may engage, on a temporary basis, the services of a person with technical or specialized knowledge to advise or assist the commissioner....” Frankly, if you’re going to do this right, it should be the Ombudsman who has the authority to deal with allegations and disclosures of whistle-blowing. The Ombudsman already has the staff in place, the Ombudsman already has the mandate with respect to much public policy, the Ombudsman already has the staff who know how to do investigations and have done that very well. The current Ombudsman is not worried or concerned or afraid to take on issues that he thinks are in the public interest, so I strongly suggest to the government that the person who should be doing this should be the Ombudsman’s office, which is impartial, which is independent, which has the staff. And the Ombudsman, of course, is an officer of the assembly, so that would work very well, because he or she is selected by all of us.

I hope the government will take some of those concerns into account.

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The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I appreciate the comments made by the member from Sudbury. Just having a look at this legislation, it is a long time coming, and it’s very important for our public servants that on many of these issues there is clarification. When you think about whether it’s conflict of interest, whether it’s whistle-blowing protection, sometimes not being sure of what your rights are, not being sure of what your

protections are has a big impact on how you feel about how you do your job, and frankly, when you look at problems that have occurred at all levels of government through the years, sometimes it comes down to a matter of judgment. So the clarification of things like conflict of interest, for example, is very, very important to people: what’s appropriate and what’s not appropriate behaviour.

And that sometimes changes, depending on where you are in the country, depending on what level of government you’re at and the culture that’s developed in those particular organizations. In some places it would probably not be appropriate to go out for lunch with somebody who may be a stakeholder. In other places, it would be entirely appropriate but there might be limits put on it. So the clarification of these things and the limiting of judgments I think is very, very important to the public servants themselves, because at least they know where they stand—and to government as well in terms of the image of the provincial government. I’m not talking about the provincial government in terms of the McGuinty government; I’m talking about the entire public service and the image of the public service.

That’s important to the public. It’s important that they have confidence in the people whom they are paying to provide the important services that these individuals are providing. Our government has confidence in our public servants, but we feel this clarification in terms of conflict of interest will go a long way in making their job a lot easier and provide a higher level of morale in the public service.

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby-Ajax): One of the promises made by the McGuinty Liberals in the 2003 election campaign was to make government business public business. This was a promise to the taxpayers to ensure that the public service continued to be “accountable, ethical, nonpartisan and professional.” It was also to protect public servants with whistle-blower protection, so that they would be able to speak out on important issues without fear of reprisal.

Well, with respect to the government business/public business issue, what happened? We get legislation brought forward with no consultation, very reminiscent of what’s happened with Bill 107, which we’re dealing with right now, the proposed human rights reform legislation, where all of the sudden we have a piece of legislation that we’re presented with that has had no consultation with the public to speak of, and one is left to wonder whether it’s actually going to achieve the purposes intended or not.

With respect to the second issue, whistle-blower protection, we have the Integrity Commissioner, who is going to be the person enforcing this legislation, and we’re wondering why the Ombudsman, who has a much larger staff and the capacity to deal with these issues, wasn’t the one who was chosen, rather than the Integrity Commissioner, who of course would be very capable but has very few staff and few resources. So again, very reminiscent of the Bill 107 issue that we’re dealing with, this so-called legal support centre, which has been

described by one of the presenters as a set of amorphous promises with very little substance. One has to wonder whether this proposed whistle-blower protection promised by this legislation isn't just more of the same.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments? The member from—

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth—Middlesex): Perth—

The Acting Speaker: —Perth—Middlesex.

Mr. Wilkinson: That's right, the good Speaker from Beaches—East York who's sitting in. Or is it the Beach—East York? I'm not exactly sure about that, Speaker.

I'm more than happy to enter into the debate on Bill 158. I come from this—very simply, Mr. Speaker, Steve Guylee, who works at the Stratford Jail, is a member of OPSEU, if I remember correctly. I've met him many times. I had the opportunity of actually spending a day at the Stratford Jail, working with the corrections officers and seeing the tremendous public service that they do. I didn't really have any idea whatsoever of what they did, but they do remarkable work, keeping us and our community and our families safe, and I applaud them for that.

But it was Steve who came to me and asked about a promise made by our party on the campaign trail about the necessity to enshrine successor rights. He's been a tireless advocate for that cause since my election, and when we introduced this bill I sent him an e-mail right away, just to let him know that this was yet another thing that we have been able to accomplish as a government. So I know I will support the bill just on the fact that we campaigned to have successor rights for our public servants and that we're delivering on that, and I appreciate that.

I was a bit confused. I've been here this evening and I know that Mr. Tascona, the member from Barrie—Simcoe—Bradford, was having some concerns about whistle-blowing protection, but then I was reading in Hansard that he had said, "The whistle-blowing part of the bill is certainly welcomed." I don't think he thinks it's welcome now, so I'll have to maybe chat with Mr. Tascona, because he seems to have changed his position on this. He said he looked forward to seeing how it was actually going to operate, that it's obviously going to require significant resources and expertise for that to be handled in a timely manner, in terms of what we're dealing with, but, and I quote, "The whistle-blowing part of the bill is certainly welcomed."

I'll be speaking to this further, but I look forward to supporting Bill 158.

Mr. O'Toole: The member from Nickel Belt, I would say, has her heart in the bill. I just want to point out one of the things on the successor rights schedule. There are four schedules to this bill. The successor rights provision says, if you look at schedule D, "Various provisions of the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act, 1997, that treat crown employees differently than other employees for certain purposes are amended or repealed to remove that distinction." However, it goes on to say, "The act is also amended to clarify that the crown shall

not be considered a successor employer under the act, but that nothing in the act shall be interpreted to prevent the application...." In other words, new employees may not be considered. So it's ambiguous in schedule D, if you look at it in any detail.

One of the main things that's been spoken of tonight is the whistle-blower provision. The member from Stratford, from Shakespeare, is actually right when he says that the member from Barrie—Simcoe—Bradford tried to make the distinction that the whistle-blower provision—Mr. Tory and the caucus on the John Tory side of the House agree. What we have a problem with is creating a whole new regime so it's sort of internal to government. We already have the Ombudsman of Ontario with the resources, the staff and the know-how to be independent and impartial, and to bring some protection for those persons who take great personal risk.

If you look at the history of the Liberal government on this issue, it's almost confounding. When you look at Allan Cutler declaring the issue of the sponsorship scandal and how shabbily he was treated, the moniker is there, the brand is there: the Liberals and conflict of interest, Adscam. It was the cause of a federal election. I have no confidence that the McGuinty government will protect employees who have the courage to come forward to challenge the decisions made by this government, the McGuinty government.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Nickel Belt has two minutes.

Ms. Martel: Thanks to all the members for their comments. I just want to raise one final concern that I didn't have a chance to. This has to do with section 129. After the Integrity Commissioner carries out his or her investigation, they have to give a copy of their report to the minister or to the public body for which the minister has responsibility. The Integrity Commissioner, after doing that, "may" require that the person to whom the commissioner made the report should provide another report about the actions or the proposals they're going to take to respond to his recommendations or explaining why a recommended action is not going to be taken. Frankly, that should be changed to "shall." There should absolutely be a response from the minister in the ministry where the whistle-blower was, to say what the government is going to do, and in what kind of time frame, to respond to the recommendations or the action that has been outlined.

I can't think of reasons why that minister or ministry wouldn't be responding to the recommendations. If we have gotten to the point where a whistle-blower has carried out the disclosure, where an investigation by the Integrity Commissioner has occurred, where a report has been written and recommendations made to deal with the situation, then I'm not sure what any kind of legitimate reason would be for the ministry or minister not to have to respond, or for the public body that the minister is responsible for not to have to respond to those recommendations. So that section requires some specific changes to say that there shall be a report back, and the

government needs to think seriously again about what possible scenarios there might be where the government wouldn't have to respond.

Again, I just think that if the government is serious about this, then this mandate, this authority, should be given to the Ombudsman. He has the staff already. His staff certainly know how to investigate.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): He's busy.

Ms. Martel: He's busy, and that's a very good thing. I'd like to see him even busier dealing with whistleblower allegations. I think that the Ombudsman is the best person to do that job.

The Acting Speaker: The time now being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 2130.

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